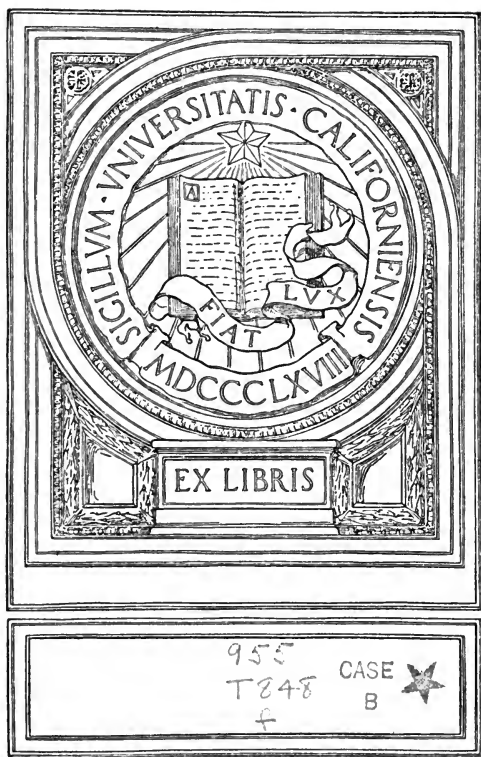




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FATHER EUSTACE:

A TALE OF THE JESUITS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

“THE VICAR OF WREXHILL,” “THE BARNABYS,”

“THE ATTRACTIVE MAN,”

ETC.

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FATHER EUSTACE.

CHAPTER I.

NOT even the new-born feeling of profound, sublime, and almost solemn happiness with which Juliana's persuasion that she was beloved as fondly as she loved, had filled her heart—not even this happiness, great as it was, could so wholly absorb her, as to make her unmindful of her less happy friend, Fanny Clarence.

The illness of Lady Sarah, never very serious, soon vanished entirely by the aid of proper remedies, and proper care, and her first thought, on again recovering her liberty, was

that she would employ it in making her promised visit to Mrs. Clarence.

She accordingly set out alone, going prudently in a closed carriage, to call upon Mrs. Stanberry, very resolutely determined not to return to the castle till she had achieved some change in the almost ludicrous, but very completely miserable position of poor Fanny.

On entering Mrs. Stanberry's drawing-room, she fortunately found the mistress of it alone, which much facilitated her object of being admitted to Mrs. Clarence, as the moment Lady Sarah mentioned her wish to become personally known to her sister, Mrs. Stanberry was quite in a fidget till the introduction had taken place, declaring that she considered the proposal as a very obliging attention, and that she thought a little variety might do Mrs. Clarence a great deal of good.

Had the fair Adelaide been present, it would probably have been much less easy to obtain access to her.

On the introduction of Lady Sarah into the room where the almost crippled lady was reposing on a sofa, a vivid blush that mounted to

the cheeks of the invalid, convinced the visitor that her coming was expected by her, and that Fanny had already prepared her for the invitation which was to follow. There could have been no difficulty whatever in giving this invitation in the manner agreed upon, in the presence of Mrs. Stanberry, but at the very moment when Lady Sarah was about to open the subject, Mrs. Clarence turned to her sister, and said, "You will be surprised, dear Fanny, and so will Lady Sarah too, when I tell you that I wish to have a few minutes' conversation alone with her. A communication was privately made to me some time ago, upon which I promised to consult her, when I had an opportunity; but it must be done without any witnesses."

Mrs. Stanberry laughed, and replied, "This is something mysterious, indeed, sister! I did not know that you had ever heard the name of Lady Sarah de Morley in your life, till you heard us talk about her ladyship here."

As she rose from her seat, and prepared to depart while she said this, Mrs. Clarence did not feel under the necessity of entering into

any farther explanation. She only smiled, and nodded a good-natured adieu, and then, having waited only till the door was closed, prevented any feeling of embarrassment on the part of Lady Sarah, by at once addressing her with the warmest expressions of gratitude.

“But it is quite impossible, Lady Sarah,” she continued, “that I should succeed in expressing what I feel for all the flattering kindness of Miss de Morley for my poor girl, or for your unequalled benevolence towards us both. The only return I can offer is one which I am well aware most persons would very strenuously decline accepting. But, unfortunately for poor humanity, your ladyship does not belong to that larger division of our fellow creatures, and I am therefore not without hope that you will accept the perfect confidence which I wish to repose in you.”

“Indeed I will, and very gratefully,” replied Lady Sarah, kindly. “Our children have begun this pleasant intercourse, and we should do them wrong did we not sanction it by following their example.”

“Well, then, dear lady!” returned Mrs. Cla-

rence, "I will frankly confess to you that I think these dear children quite wrong as to the manner in which they propose to proceed. Of my poor niece Adelaide, I know wonderfully little, considering that I have been now for several months in the same house with her; but I know my own girl much too well to doubt any part of the report she has made, either to me, or to Miss de Morley, respecting her. I therefore fear—alas! I more than fear, that she is pretty nearly exactly the reverse of all we would wish her to be. But of my sister, my dear, generous, affectionate sister, I cannot suffer even my own dear child to judge, when her feelings lead her to do so, with severity. It is not only her generous kindness to us at the present moment which influences my opinion of her; it is the long knowledge of the warm affection of her heart through childhood, and through youth, and this long knowledge is such as to render it absolutely impossible for me either to leave her house in the manner proposed, or to consent that Mr. Curtis should be permitted to propose for Fanny, and communicate his proposal to his parents, without

my dear good sister's being also made acquainted with it."

"My dear Mrs. Clarence," replied Lady Sarah, greatly delighted with the spirit of frankness which accorded so well with her own character, "it is impossible to help both admiring and approving your feelings, and I think I am one of the last people in the world likely to oppose them; but, nevertheless, before we venture to enter upon the course you propose, it will be necessary to turn our thoughts to the probable effect which the sudden disclosure of William Curtis's *real* attachment is likely to have upon Miss Stanberry. Her devotion to him is such, that no one who has seen them together can doubt the nature of her feelings. I by no means think that it would be desirable for my valued young friend, Curtis, to give up his real attachment, in order to keep this hot-headed girl in the fool's paradise which her vanity has created. But I will not conceal from you the fact, that I should be *afraid of her*, if Fanny were to come before her at the time she first learnt her mistake."

“Afraid of her, dear lady?” returned Mrs. Clarence, smiling. “I suppose your fears do not go the length of supposing that my niece will make any personal attack upon my poor little Fanny?”

It is probable that Lady Sarah did not return the smile so gaily as was expected, for Mrs. Clarence resumed, in a graver tone—

“All young people, I believe, are apt to exaggerate their own feelings, and those of others also; and I doubt not that Fanny, who is still very young, has conceived herself, and unreflectingly conveyed to Miss de Morley, a very tragic view of the whole business; yet, were you and I, dear Lady Sarah, to look at it quite reasonably, we should be very likely to find comedy predominate. Such being my view of the case, you will scarcely wonder that I should have decided upon repeating to my dear sister exactly what Fanny has related to me. If she—my sister, I mean—should think it best for the safety, or the tranquillity of the cousins, that they should for a time be separated, I will then most gratefully accept your offered hospitality, for my child. But as to

my leaving my sister's house, from any fear of annoyance from her daughter, it is quite impossible I should think of it."

There was so much good sense, as well as good feeling in all this, that Lady Sarah felt neither power nor inclination to combat it.

"I am greatly disposed to believe you are right, Mrs. Clarence," she said, "and I joyfully accept your promise to let your dear girl take refuge in our fortress, whenever she and you shall deem it advisable that she should do so."

And this conclusion having been reached, Lady Sarah took her leave, somewhat disappointed, because she knew that her Juliana would be so, but greatly delighted with the appearance, manners, and feelings of her new acquaintance, and thinking her perfectly right in principle as to the line of conduct to be pursued towards her sister, but a little misdoubting, nevertheless, the result of treating the terrific Miss Adelaide as if she were a reasonable being.

* * * * *

The opinion pronounced by Miss de Morley

upon this decision was much more in conformity with her own, than Lady Sarah had dared to hope for; and they both agreed that nothing more could be done, on their part, till the manner in which the disclosure of the lovers' secret was received should be known.

The helplessness of Mrs. Clarence extended no farther than her limbs; her mind was as active as ever; and having passed through the interview with Lady Sarah, which, in proof of gratitude for her kindness, she had determined should precede her communication to her sister, she delayed no longer, but having heard the Cuthbert Castle carriage drive from the house, she rang the bell, which was ever carefully placed within her reach, and sent to request Mrs. Stanberry to come to her.

Fanny, in compliance with her mother's desire, as well as her own, had put on her bonnet and shawl, and slipped out, as soon as Lady Sarah arrived, in order to prevent the possibility of her being called upon the scene during any of the agitating discussions which were likely to ensue. And, if the truth must be spoken, she was, during a pretty consi-

derable portion of the time so employed, enjoying the doubtful pleasure of conjecture with Mr. William Curtis himself, beneath the sheltering shades of the Cuthbert Castle shrubberies.

Mrs. Stanberry obeyed her sister's summons instantly, a little curious, it may be, to ascertain whether what had passed during Lady Sarah's visit, was for ever to remain a secret, or not.

Her doubts on this point were immediately removed by Mrs. Clarence's saying, the moment they were alone together, "Now, my dear Fanny, having permission to do so, I am going to let you into the mystery of my *tête-à-tête* conversation with Lady Sarah de Morley, which must, I think, have puzzled you not a little."

"Indeed, it *has* puzzled me, Adelaide!" returned Mrs. Stanberry, "and I shall feel a great deal more comfortable when you have told me all about it. I do so hate secrets, unless I am let into them myself!"

"And I hate them, whether I am one of the initiated, or not," replied Mrs. Clarence;

“and it is for that reason, among others, I am now going to destroy a secret altogether, by making public what has hitherto been very foolishly concealed.”

“What can it be about?” cried Mrs. Stanberry, drawing her chair as close as possible to the couch of her sister.

“It is about my little Fanny,” replied Mrs. Clarence. “She has made a conquest, sister.”

“Made a conquest! How can that possibly be, my dear?—unless, indeed, it was before she came here; for I do not believe that anybody has seen her—that is, not seen much of her,” added Mrs. Stanberry, correcting herself, and remembering that her sister had been carefully kept in ignorance of the invalid costume.

“Nevertheless, the conquest was made *here*, dear Fanny. But though Love is often said to be blind, he might sometimes be called lynx-eyed, and has proved himself so in the present instance,” said Mrs. Clarence; “for little as my insignificant girl has been seen by your friend, Mr. William Curtis, he has contrived to fall in love with her.”

“Mr. William Curtis contrived to fall in

love with your daughter Fanny!" exclaimed poor Mrs. Stanberry, in a tone which very nearly amounted to a scream. "William Curtis in love with anybody but—What folly! I should like to know, sister Adelaide, who it was that put that nonsense into your head?"

"It was Fanny herself who told me of it first; and this visit from Lady Sarah de Morley to-day, was for the purpose of offering her services for propitiating the parents of the young man," replied Mrs. Clarence, quietly.

"Lady Sarah de Morley told you that, to her knowledge, William Curtis wanted to marry your daughter Fanny?" said Mrs. Stanberry, looking so terrified as very greatly to distress her sister, who understood but too well the cause of it.

For a moment Mrs. Clarence remained silent, but remembering that such forbearance could do no good, she replied, "Indeed she did, my dear sister."

"Then God help us all!" returned Mrs. Stanberry, with a visible shudder. "You have no secrets from me, sister, and why should I have any from you? Secrets, indeed!

Heaven knows that the misery that is come upon us will be no secret long. You don't know much of your niece as yet, Mrs. Clarence, but you are now likely to know more. She is the loveliest creature that God ever made. Nobody, I suppose, will deny that—not even that false traitor-villain, young Curtis! But when she is crossed!—oh! my dear, dear Addy!—I have no words to speak what she is like then! Oh sister! she will go mad, and I shall die!”

And here the unfortunate mother of the loveliest creature in the world fell into a sort of hysterical crying fit, inexpressibly distressing to her sister. At first she endeavoured to check this vehement emotion, by speaking soothingly, and hopefully to her; but perceiving that her agitation seemed to be only increased by this, and to take more and more the character of a fit, she rang her bell, and got some female servants to bring cold water, and strong essences, to assist in removing it.

One of these soubrettes, thinking, perhaps, that her young lady's presence might prove efficacious in bringing her old one to herself,

informed the beauteous Adelaide, as she bounded past her door in search of *sal volatile*, that her mamma was taken in a fit, and like to die, and that she would find her in Mrs. Clarence's sitting-room.

Upon hearing this startling intelligence, Miss Stanberry dutifully hastened to her aunt's room, but being, at the very moment it reached her, absorbed in a profound reverie, upon the best method of making William Curtis understand that he had nothing to fear from her severity, and that the sooner they consulted their respective parents on the subject of their marriage, the better—being, I say, in very deep meditation on this not quite easy subject, at the moment the news of her mother's attack reached her, she entered the room with a look of absence, which rather suggested the idea of indifference, than concern.

Mrs. Clarence had considerably more of their Italian mother's character than her sister; but, though ardent, and resolute, her mind was well regulated, and rarely indeed did it happen that constitutional warmth got the better of her well-tutored reason; but it is

possible, that at that moment she felt a little provoked at the sort of unmeaning stare with which Adelaide contemplated her adoring mother's agitated features, for when she said, "Pray, ma'am, what is the matter?" Mrs. Clarence replied, "Nothing very important, my dear, I should hope. Your poor dear mamma has fallen into this agitation in consequence of my telling her that young Mr. Curtis has made an offer of marriage to your cousin Fanny. From something she said, I suspect she thinks that you like him yourself, Adelaide; but I never can believe, my dear, that you would be such a goose as to fall in love with a man who likes somebody else better."

Had thoughts the power of carrying death, something very fatal might have been the result of these bold words, but, fortunately for us all, mortals are not armed with such ready missives, and after breathing one short inaudible anathema, Miss Stanberry recovered sufficient command over herself to reply—

"Nonsense, Aunt Clarence! It is quite impossible I should believe that mamma ever

said any such thing, unless she was delirious. Perhaps I had better send to Stockington for the apothecary? At any rate, I had better write a note to him at once, and then we may send it, or not, as you shall think best."

Having thus spoken, she rushed out of the room, and took shelter in her own; and greatly did she need the solitude she found there, for certainly, nothing could be much less fit to meet the eye, or the judgment of a spectator, than was her condition at the moment when she bolted and double-locked her door, in order to give unbridled vent to her feelings.

Knowing herself secure from interruption, her first impulse led her to throw herself prostrate on the floor, and, had not the dread of being heard, sufficed to check her, a frightful string of imprecations might have issued from her lips, for her heart was full of them.

But this state did not last long; she would probably have lost her reason if it had. The first thing which roused her from it, was the thought that it was possible that what she had heard might not be true. No sooner had this hope suggested itself, than a multitude of

thoughts and recollections came forward to support it. And certainly, without having any overweening propensity to disbelief, there was enough to make her doubt. Did she not know, or, at least, had she not good reason for thinking she did, that William Curtis had never spoken to Fanny Clarence in his life? Nay, might she not almost say that he had never seen her?

The more she thought of this, the more composed, and reassured she became; till at length she fairly reached the comfortable conviction that the thing was impossible, absolutely impossible.

Then followed a long meditation upon the course and source of the invention. She had no very strong belief in the affection either of her aunt, or her cousin; and she certainly had very respectably strong reasons for this; namely, that she had taken great, and pretty nearly incessant pains to make them hate her; nevertheless, she was too acute to believe that her aunt Clarence was a person likely to indulge the feeling so begot, by the invention of such

a fable as she had just listened to. Some other person, then, must have invented it.

Adelaide knew that Lady Sarah de Morley had been there. Lady Sarah de Morley was her detestation, for Lady Sarah de Morley, she had long been persuaded, was greatly desirous of seeing her daughter bestow herself and her wealth, upon the son of the only person in the neighbourhood whom she seemed to value as an intimate friend.

Of late, indeed, her suspicions respecting Mr. Curtis's admiration of Miss de Morley had, in some degree, subsided, chiefly because the evident devotion of Mr. Stormont to the heiress, and the gracious manner in which it was received, had left but little opportunity for any one else to approach her. But now, all this was forgotten, and all her former suspicions revived. So firmly was she herself persuaded that the idle boyish sort of gallantry of which young Curtis had formerly made her the object, was the decided demonstration of a violent passion, that she really did not conceive it possible that any of the neighbourhood who had witnessed it could have

failed of coming to the same conclusion; and she now thought that this report of his attachment to her cousin, was only put in circulation, and thus conveyed to her, in the hope of producing such a coolness in her manner to her lover as might lead to an ultimate quarrel and separation.

That Lady Sarah and her daughter should believe this to be necessary to the success of their projects, (of the existence of which her heated fancy was now again as full as ever,) —that they should believe that so only they could hope to induce him to let interest succeed to love in his heart, gave her a feeling of delight, that well repaid her for the agony which she had suffered for a moment; and while under the influence of this soothing feeling, her heart became so tender, as to make her really anxious to have a private interview with her mother, for the purpose of convincing her that she need not make herself uneasy concerning the absurd statement which had been made about Fanny Clarence.

She accordingly repaired the disordered tresses of her raven hair, wiped the traces of

her one passionate burst of tears from her eyes, and returned to the dressing-room of her aunt.

She was pleased, however, to find that her mother was no longer there, but had recovered herself sufficiently to return to her own room, and having followed her thither, she very greatly relieved the poor lady's heart, by assuring her that there was not a shadow of truth in the news her Aunt Clarence had been silly enough to believe on the word of Lady Sarah de Morley. She assured her that she herself knew perfectly well what she was about, and only desired that no notice whatever might be taken of an invention so utterly absurd.

She still farther tranquillized her mother by adding, that she perfectly understood Lady Sarah de Morley's motives for the invention, though at the present moment she would rather not enter upon an explanation of them; and, in short, this tremendous disclosure ended, for the time, with no visible interruption of the half-and-half sort of civility with which Miss Stanberry treated her cousin.

When Fanny returned from her not very dis-

agreeable walk, (notwithstanding her trembling guesses of all that was going on at home,) her mother recounted all that had passed, and great was the astonishment of both when comparing, afterwards, the violent agitation of Mrs. Stanberry, on first hearing of the proposal which had been made to Fanny, with Adelaide's perfectly unchanged and indifferent demeanour.

Again and again they talked the matter over together, but never could advance an inch towards discovering any cause that might account for it. At length, after mutually sinking into silence, as if to seek, in the wild region of conjecture, some fresh food for discussion on this impenetrable mystery, Fanny brought the conversation to an end, by saying, "After all, Mamma, I think we are acting very unwisely in thus labouring to discover some unpleasant cause for what is, in its effect, extremely pleasant. Amongst all the motives of Adelaide's unexpected demeanour which we have supposed possible, there is not one which is not full of misery. What say you to our turning the tables, and conjecturing that she

has only, like himself, been indulging in a very idle flirtation, which really meant nothing, and had no other object than the mere amusement of the moment?"

That this was the case with respect to Curtis, he had himself confessed to Fanny, with many expressions of contrition; and having judged *him* leniently, she now declared herself more disposed than she had ever felt before to judge her capricious cousin leniently too.

"If she will give *me* absolution, Mamma," continued the now gay and hopeful girl, "I will not refuse it to her. William Curtis says, that he has neither doubts nor fears respecting what his father and mother will say in the business—he seems so very sure of their consent, that it would be worse than folly in us, dear mother, to torment ourselves by doubting it; and if all this be so!—if, indeed, I am to be so blessed as to have a home, and a house for my mother, without giving my beautiful cousin Adelaide any trouble about me, shall we not be the very happiest mother and daughter in the world?"

It is possible that Mrs. Clarence might not

think it so easy as Fanny seemed to do, to interpret the conduct of her niece, by presuming her to have been amusing herself by an unmeaning flirtation; but a moment's thought convinced her that it would be more wise, as well as more kind, to let the delusion, if it were such, endure, than to check the new happiness which sparkled so brightly in her Fanny's eye, by foretelling sorrows which perhaps might never come. And so, in a word, they practically adhered to the very excellent, and justly popular injunction, which bids us "hope the best," and this, as they had been for a good while accustomed to the contrary system of "fearing the worst," was so great an amelioration of their condition, that they might have been truly called, as far as their own sensations went, exceedingly happy, though surrounded by moral quicksands, which threatened danger of no trifling kind.

CHAPTER II.

THE slow and melancholy steps of Father Eustace brought him to the castle within half an hour of Lady Sarah de Morley's return from Mrs. Stanberry's. But even this short interval had sufficed to put Juliana in possession of all the most essential points of her ladyship's interview with Mrs. Clarence, and they were in the act of discussing the probable results when "Mr. Stormont" was announced.

The blush of happiness is always beautiful, for it comes at a moment when the expression of the eye accords well with its brightness, and never had Juliana looked so radiantly beautiful, as when she frankly put her hand into that of their visitor, and said, "I am so glad you are come, Mr. Stormont! for Mamma is quite well again, and I wanted to tell you

so, but feared that both you and she would laugh at me if I sent off an express for the purpose."

Mr. Stormont received her offered hand, and returned her smile, but the courtesy, and the gaiety, both, were like the "whited walls of a sepulchre," that hid all which the eye would most shrink from contemplating.

That the heart of Father Eustace was a pure and right noble heart, was proved at that moment beyond any possibility of doubt, for neither her exceeding beauty, nor the speaking softness of the eyes that were fixed on his, caused him to turn his thoughts upon himself for a single moment. Yet he was not indifferent, not unconscious, not insensible, to the fascination of the look, and manner, which thus greeted him.

Had he been so, he would have escaped the agony of knowing, as he did know, all the misery which the DUTY upon which he was engaged must bring upon *her*.

As a moral spectacle, it is not easy to conceive anything more beautiful than the self-devotion of Edward Stormont, under the cir-

cumstances in which he was placed; nor is it possible honestly to deny, that an abstract principle of duty, capable of so controlling the will of a human being, has in it something very essentially sublime.

But then comes the all-important question relative to the holiness of this prostration of one man's reason, as well as will, to the reason and the will of another. That there are some, nay, many, who truly and heartily believe such prostration to be a duty, it would be much worse than folly to deny; but although each individual instance of this self-conquering devotion is admirable in itself, it by no means follows, that the human power which enforces it is admirable also, and it requires a much more clearly made out balance in favour of the benefits derived by man from the code of Ignatius Loyola, than the centuries during which it has been in operation have yet exhibited, before an honest-spirited and perfectly unbiassed looker-on can wish to see it spread itself over the earth, as the great moral and religious law by which man can best obey the written word of God.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding this, and much more that might be said against the principle, the conduct of Father Eustace, while thus acting under its dictates, was ADMIRABLE.

If any one had recalled his attention to himself, and led him to confess the state of his own feelings, and the chance of future peace, to say nothing of happiness, which remained for him on earth, he would have been found at that very moment more hopelessly sure that he never could taste any feeling of enjoyment more, than often falls to the lot of the most avowedly wretched of the human race.

But his attention *never* was recalled to himself, no, not for a single moment. He saw, in the bright welcome of her eye, in the rosy blush of her fair cheek, in the softened accents of her charming voice, that she loved him; and he knew that it was *because* she loved him, that she felt drawn, by a force too strong for any former opinions to resist, from the long triumphant dogmas of her mother's creed, to the long-rejected faith of her father. And this consideration sufficed to make him deem it *his duty* to persevere in winning her pure

and innocent soul away from her, while sternly steadfast as is the hidden rock that wrecks the hoping mariner, that she should receive nothing but life-destroying disappointment in return.

He indulged his delighted victim in half an hour's brilliant, animated, and graceful discussion on the different schools of musical composition, and of the respective power of each, upon the feelings, and even upon the intellect; then glided off to admirable criticism upon painting, and showed that a cultivated taste for art, was in no way incompatible with the development of the highest order of faculties. And then he rose higher still, and talked of the language, and of the soul of poetry,—

“Fit words attended on his weighty sense,
And mild persuasion, flowed in eloquence.”

And as he talked, and talked, she listened, and she gazed, till her very life seemed to hang upon her lips; and Father Eustace saw, and understood it all; and, by a strange confusion of feeling, and intellect, he lapped his conscience in a sort of pious elysium, by thinking, as he gazed and listened in return, (for he did both,) that the better, and the lovelier he found

her, the more imperative was the duty which commanded that he should win her to become the spouse of Christ.

During nearly the whole of this time, Lady Sarah de Morley permitted herself, by politely slow degrees, to get deeply occupied by a peculiarly interesting third volume, which she had left, with deep regret, when obliged to set off upon her expedition to Mrs. Stanberry's; but both her personal presence, and her mental absence, appeared to be equally matters of indifference to her companions; and three hours made themselves wings, and were gone for ever, before either of them began to be aware that the visit must of necessity draw to a conclusion, because the daylight was doing so.

Even this circumstance might probably have been permitted to advance upon them without notice, had not Lady Sarah closed her book, and very innocently said, "Upon my word, it is so dark, that I cannot see to read."

Thus roused to a proper degree of attention to this lower world, Mr. Stormont rose, and having apologized very gracefully for having forgotten that it was so very late, concluded

his visit by inviting the two ladies to do him the honour of dining with him on the first day of the following week.

The invitation was very graciously accepted, and the visitor took his leave.

When Mr. Stormont set out upon his expedition, it was his intention, if his invitation at the castle proved successful, to have called at the rectory, in order to invite its little-loved inhabitant also; for neither himself nor his coadjutors were of the school who deem a strong personal dislike any reason for cutting a man's acquaintance, provided there be any motive of interest, or convenience, which makes it desirable that he should not be cut.

It cannot, I think, be denied, that however high-minded the disciples of Loyola may prove themselves by their resolute conquest over the human weakness which leads men to like having a will of their own, they have, in another direction, a strong propensity to what is not generally accounted the mark of a great mind. They often are, or, at any rate, they often seem to be, considerably addicted to that sort of familiar acquaintance with the affairs of their

neighbours, which in common parlance is denominated, *gossiping*. Mr. Stormont, for instance, somehow or other, knew as well as any country-town specimen of an inquiring mind that ever was born, that Mr. Wardour certainly did like the company and conversation of Lady Sarah de Morley, better than that of any other person in his parish, or probably out of it. He knew perfectly well, also, though it would be really difficult to say how he got at it, that Mr. Stephen Rowley had a considerably strong feeling of admiration, both for the person and the title of Lady Louisa Letchmeer. As to Miss Stanberry's partiality for Mr. William Curtis, it has been already shown that he was perfectly aware of it; nor was he at all more at a loss concerning the Lady Margaret Letchmeer's preference; even the quiet little persuasion of Miss Raymond, that the best thing Mr. Wardour could possibly do, would be to marry her, and her well-secured seven thousand pounds, was no secret to him.

And it was a natural consequence of all this information, that in giving his invitation at

the castle, he should have determined that the invitation to the rectory should not be long after it.

But to have delivered this, as well as one or two others, in person, according to his first intention, was now impossible; he had barely time to reach his own house by the time of dinner, and the fascination which had detained him was not remembered, during his homeward walk, without terror, though he was consoled by the conviction, that the great end had never been lost sight of, and, moreover, that it had not been remembered in vain.

Had poor Juliana been made aware of the entire nature of these meditations, much misery might even then have been spared her. And yet not all her "quantity of love" would in that case have enabled her to have judged Mr. Stormont fairly.

She must, in order to do so, have known more than the thoughts which at that hour passed through her brain could enable her to do. She must have known how deeply had sunk into his very nature, the belief, that all that he was commanded to do, it was his

bounden duty to perform, let the consequence be what it might, either to himself and others, and deplorable as such a declaration appears to a sound uncrippled judgment, he had in truth been brought into such a condition of mind, as to say, with a perfectly guiltless conscience,

“Evil! be thou my good!”

* * * * *

The time which, if not lost, had been at least expended at the castle, was atoned for by the diligence with which all the purposed invitations were dispatched afterwards.

Everybody was most fortunately disengaged, and everybody was most extremely happy to accept his invitation; so that on the appointed day, the village party which has been so repeatedly brought before the reader, was brought before the equally discerning observation of Mr. Mills, and Mrs. Vavator.

Notwithstanding the proverbial difficulty of pleasing everybody, it is a positive fact, that on the present occasion everybody *was* pleased. Mrs. Rowley was pleased, both because the

dinner was very good, and yet not nearly so good as her own.

Her sons, because every one of their three new acquaintance had found something especially flattering and agreeable to say to each of them—a circumstance which, notwithstanding the large amount to which the English funds stood indebted to them all, did not very often occur.

Mr. Raymond was pleased, because both the stranger gentleman, and the elegant Mrs. Vavasor into the bargain, spoke with taste and feeling on the subject of horse-flesh ; and his daughter was pleased, because she was assured by them, that the report of her admirable manner of riding was the theme of every tongue.

Lady Setterton and her daughters were pleased, because both the rank and the beauty allotted to them were distinctly referred to, by their host, and his two inmates, in a manner which proved them to be persons of excellent taste and finished breeding.

The Curtis family could not fail to be

pleased by the particularly flattering attention with which they were all and each received.

The Rector was pleased, because his new parishioners were people of superior understanding, and very elegant manners; and Lady Sarah, to whom he made the remark, completely agreed with him.

Nor did the Honourable Mrs. Stanberry fail to approve what she called the “*decided appearance of fashion*” which Mrs. Vavasor’s person, dress, and demeanour displayed; while the marked attention which she paid to Adelaide, convinced her, that besides being a woman of fashion, she must also be a woman of discriminating taste, and unerring judgment. In short, the *success*, to use a drawing-room phrase, of this first reception, was perfect, upon all the individuals who have been named.

What it was upon Juliana and Adelaide, who might, upon this occasion, be considered as the joint heroines of the day, deserves a separate chapter to explain.

CHAPTER III.

THE drawing-room apartment at Langley Knoll consisted of one good middle-sized room, very amply furnished, though now wearing the peculiar dun hue, which furnished mansions, that have been let to more tenants than one, are apt to assume. But at one end of it was a much smaller room, communicating with the first by a pair of rather small folding doors, which usually remained open. This little room had been fitted with more expense and pretension than its larger neighbour, and had preserved its complexion better, so that nobody entered it without still exclaiming, "What a very pretty room!" And being at the gable end of the house, it had, moreover, the advantage of a window commanding a dif-

ferent and more richly-wooded point of view than any other on the ground floor.

This window had the farther advantage of being a very large one, and of opening to the ground, so as to give access to a charming little flower garden, communicating, at right angles, with the terrace which has been already mentioned.

Yet, notwithstanding the attractions of this smaller room, it was the larger one which appeared the favourite; for it was there that the whole party seated themselves, after having sufficiently admired its little neighbour. When the company, which was a pretty large one, returned from the dining-room, they found *the* drawing-room, *par excellence*, extremely well lighted, but the other only sufficiently so, to indicate that it was ready for use if wanted.

During dinner, Mrs. Vavasor, adopting the fashion of Old England, sat at the head of the table, and was thus, of necessity, separated from the two young ladies, who were to her the only very interesting part of the company. And not only in this, but in every other part of the dinner-table arrangement, did the ty-

ranny of etiquette interfere to prevent what the host, and his inmates, would have considered as the most desirable mode of disposing of the company. But to this they all submitted, nor was it till after the coffee had gone its round, that anything like *particular* conversation was attempted by any of them.

It was then, that Mrs. Vavasor, who possessed that perfection of manner which is produced by a combination of good sense, good taste, unfailing self-possession, and an early and familiar acquaintance with good society—it was then that she drew near to Adelaide, and, with all the charm that such a manner can give, entered into conversation with her.

There is a familiar phrase, not particularly elegant, but in frequent use, probably because it expresses shortly what might require much wordy explanation without it. In discussing the merits, or rather the demerits of a person not greatly liked, it is by no means uncommon to hear the critique brought to a conclusion by the words “He (or she) is no fool,” and this generally pronounced as a sort of *bon gré*

mal gré confession of a fact, which cannot, consistently with truth, be denied.

It is somewhat in this manner that I now feel myself called upon to declare that Adelaide Stanberry, notwithstanding all her detestabilities, was no fool. The quickness with which she perceived that Mrs. Vavasor was a person worth talking to, was a proof of this. And no moment could have been better chosen for finding the imperious beauty in a humour to converse.

Mr. Stormont had taken especial care that she should be taken out by William Curtis, and though the young man had certainly not been either lively or agreeable in any way, while he sat beside her, the mere fact that he was not sitting by any one else (for Mrs. Rowley, who was on the other side of him, she considered as nobody) was sufficient to make her as happy as she could be, when not dancing with him, or in any other way making particular love. As William Curtis had been desired to lead her out of the drawing-room, he was, of course, destined to lead her back to it;

and this ceremony being duly performed, the enamoured Adelaide began to flatter herself that now, as it was no longer necessary for the company to be drawn up in two long lines, as if on purpose to watch each other, there might be some opportunity for him to return to that enchanting sort of intercourse, which used so often to take place between them when he first returned from abroad, and which still lived so vividly in her memory, as almost to prevent the possibility of her believing that it was gone for ever.

But scarcely had she placed herself in the chair to which he had led her, than she saw him glide away, and station himself beside the equally feared, and hated, Juliana.

For the first few moments after she perceived this, her emotions were very nearly strong enough to lead her to expose herself to the observation of the whole party, by getting up, and following him; and had the place been more familiar to her, she would probably have done it; but while still debating the point with herself, she had the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing him leave the side of Ju-

liana, and cross the room to a vacant chair beside Lady Sarah. Had she known that he did this in consequence of Juliana's having hinted to him that her mother could tell him more about Fanny Clarence, than she could, the feelings with which she watched the movement would have been of rather a different kind; but, as it was, a weight of almost intolerable misery seemed removed from her heart; for was it not evident that he had only left her for the purpose of saying a few words of common civility to his mother's most intimate friends?

It was at this comparatively happy moment that Mrs. Vavasor approached her, and that, having stood beside her long enough to exchange a few courteous words, she said, with a look of flattering invitation from her very expressive eyes, "Let us take possession of that sofa, Miss Stanberry. I have a great fancy for becoming better acquainted with you."

Adelaide rose with alacrity. She was not by any means a favourite with ladies in general, and was far from being insensible to the

compliment thus paid her, by one so very strikingly superior in appearance, manner, and deportment, to any she had ever seen.

In another moment they were seated, side by side, on a sofa, sufficiently remote from the circle into which the rest of the company had formed themselves, to enable them to converse freely, *en tête-à-tête*.

"I am half afraid, my dear young lady," said Mrs. Vavasor, with a very sweet smile—"I believe I am *more* than half afraid that you will think me a strange old woman for thus violently taking possession of you."

"Indeed," replied Adelaide, very graciously, "I only think and feel that I am greatly flattered."

"My life has been one of observation," returned Mrs. Vavasor, looking in the handsome face of her companion with an air of philosophical examination; "and during my long widowhood, I have indulged myself by travelling more than most women have done, always finding my greatest pleasure, from contemplating the varieties of human character, intellect, and feeling, in all I meet. You are

much too young as yet, my dear Miss Stanberry, to have any very just idea of the skill in developing character, which this sort of habitual observation brings with it. I declare to you, that I sometimes feel almost inclined to think that I have the gift of divination, so surely do I interpret aright the characters and feelings of those who interest me sufficiently for me to make a study of them."

There was something in the eye of Miss Stanberry, as she listened to this, that seemed to indicate a feeling—not of timidity, for she had no materials for such a sensation within her—but of doubt and suspicion.

Mrs. Vavasor had certainly some reason for the boast she had made, for she instantly perceived the effect her words had produced, and very adroitly assuming an air of almost imprudent candour, she added, "Now, yourself, for instance, beautiful as you are, and decidedly, I think you have the loveliest face I ever looked upon—but, beautiful as you are, my fair Adelaide, I can plainly see that all is not at peace within.—Nay, nay, my dear, you need not wince at that; had you been one of the soul-

less logs that some people agree to call 'perfect angels,' I should scarcely have bestowed a second look upon you, notwithstanding all your beauty, and most certainly not a second thought."

Adelaide smiled, but it was a sort of languid and uncertain smile.

"Nothing, in my opinion, my dear Miss Stanberry, can atone for the want of feeling, and strong passion, in a human soul; for what are we without it, but tame domestic animals, that live through their noiseless unimportant day, and die!" resumed Mrs. Vavasor. "None such can interest my feelings, or attach my heart. I am afraid I could let a poor, quiet, inanimate ne'er-do-wrong Miss, fall into a draw-well before my eyes, ere I could rouse myself to sufficient energy to stop her; while I could risk myself, life, and limb, body, and soul, by night or day, to counsel, to comfort, and to aid a young creature of my own sex who loved, and was unhappy!"

"Oh! my dear lady!—dear Mrs. Vavasor!" cried Adelaide, with sudden animation, "how rare is such a character as yours! With what

cold, what sneering glances is every involuntary indication of feeling met by those around us! I know that I have a hundred thousand faults, but indeed, Mrs. Vavasor, I believe that I should be much, *much* better, and wiser too, in every way, if I had ever in my life met with a friend who was capable of understanding me."

"Dear love!—I thought so!" ejaculated Mrs. Vavasor, in a sweet low-toned voice, that spoke the deepest feeling. "I would have hazarded my life upon the fact that you have loved devotedly, and that falsehood and treason have been at work to shake your confidence in the man you love."

"Gracious Heaven! do you think so?" cried Adelaide, with an air of such vehement agitation, as greatly alarmed Mrs. Vavasor, lest some other eye might see it beside her own.

"Come with me, Miss Stanberry," she said, aloud—"come with me for a moment into this dear little room of mine; I have got something that I want to show you."

Adelaide instantly took the hint, and, with-

out replying, rose from her chair, and preceded Mrs. Vavasor into the adjoining room. As she passed through the little folding doors, that lady seemed almost accidentally to draw them after her, so that, although not wholly closed, they were quite sufficiently so to make herself, and her companion, feel themselves alone.

“If we do not speak loud, my dear child, no one will overhear us. They are all too much occupied by that trick upon the cards that Mr. Mills is showing them. But you must calm yourself, my dear love!” she added, kissing her fair forehead affectionately. “It will not be like my usual manner of going on with those for whom I take, what some of my friends call a fever of admiration—it will not be at all according to my usual practice, if I torment instead of helping you. Hear me, my sweet girl!—I have been *vantée* among my particular friends and intimates, as a woman of prodigious talent. It is all nonsense, my dear child. I have but one talent in the world, which is the one I have just been boasting of to you; and, to tell you the honest truth,

the result of my long life's experience is, that I may travel many thousand miles, and make acquaintance with many hundred persons, before I chance to meet with one capable, as I said before, of awakening my faculties, and interesting my heart. I need not tell you that I think I have met in you one of the rare exceptions, for I have already proved to you that such is my opinion. Now, then, comes the question—will you accept of me as a friend? Will you, and can you, notwithstanding the vast difference of age, confide to me what it is that makes that fair young brow look troubled? Or, will you let me guess?"

"As to your supposing, Mrs. Vavasor, that I have any objection to having you for my friend, because you are so much older, it is quite a mistake," replied Adelaide, with *naïveté*. "I assure you," she added, "that I think it is a great deal more likely that one should find a faithful friend in an old lady than in a young one. And if I look puzzled, and surprised, and not so much delighted at your kind offers as I ought to be, it is only

because I do not quite understand what it is you do offer me."

"Your reply, Miss Stanberry, proves the admirable good sense which I find blended, in so remarkable a manner, with all the energy of exalted passion, in your fine countenance," replied Mrs. Vavasor, with the deliberate tone of deeply-speculative philosophy.

"You have shown me plainly enough what you are—what your high-toned faults, and what your impassioned virtues. It is but fair, therefore, that I should show you a little what I am. Mark me, sweet Adelaide! mark what it is that I tell you may be read upon your noble brow.—You love! Nay, do not turn from me! You love, I say, passionately, devotedly love that fine young man called Curtis. He has loved you, Adelaide, nay, he loves you still, but there is something at work against you. What it is, as yet, I know not, but I will stake my credit on the fact that there is *something*."

"You are right, Mrs. Vavasor!—You are right!" replied Adelaide, eagerly. "Yes, there

is something. And I have thought—" But here she stopped, and pressing her hand to her forehead, remained silent.

"What have you thought, my love?" demanded her new friend, kindly. "Perhaps you have thought, Adelaide, that he admired the heiress of Cuthbert Castle?"

"I certainly have thought so, Mrs. Vavasor," returned Miss Stanberry, colouring; "but I am by no means sure that I am right."

"And I, my dear, feel sure that you are wrong," replied Mrs. Vavasor.

"Then what else, who else, can it be?" returned Adelaide, trembling.

"I must see more of the neighbourhood before I can answer you," said Mrs. Vavasor.

And in saying this, Mrs. Vavasor, for once in her life, spoke what she really thought. She had by no means uttered a vain boast, when she declared that her long habits of observation enabled her to discern, in what was passing round her, a good deal of very curious matter, which escaped common observers. This was quite true. But, nevertheless, neither herself, nor any other of the very pe-

cularly discerning Society to which she belonged, would find means to carry on the great work of espionage in the masterly manner which they are so well known to do, did they spy singly.

Like a party of gipsies dispersing themselves through a neighbourhood for the purpose of telling fortunes, they all gather something in the way of information, and then make common stock of it. A little domestic fact which may have come easily to the ear of a listener on the threshold, may seem like a miraculous revelation, when repeated promptly at the distance of a score of miles. But the sagacity, as well as the news, of many, when thrown into one common cauldron, will produce such a vapour of conjecture, so strongly flavoured with both truth and probability, that (to speak learnedly) those more given to a synthetical, than an analytical mode of receiving information, may well stand wondering and aghast at the result.

Had Father Eustace never hinted to Sister Agatha that Miss de Morley had no particular partiality for Mr. William Curtis, it

is possible that the look of deep interest with which he approached her, and the sort of anxious eagerness with which she spoke to him during the few moments that he remained near her, might have deluded the holy lady into the belief that they were lovers. But though her preservation from this mistake might be due to the hint she had received, her conviction that Curtis was under the influence of some powerful feeling, which kept him in a state of anxiety and suspense, she owed entirely to her own sagacity.

But though a skilful, it was still a random shot; and had not Adelaide known where to look for the bolt, the keenness of the hit would never have been appreciated. But though her own wishes, and the improbability of her aunt's statement, had led her to believe anything, rather than the plain truth which had been told her, respecting her cousin, it was impossible she could hear Mrs. Vavasor *stake her credit that there was something at work against her*, without remembering it.

It was impossible, also, that anything could be better calculated to throw Adelaide com-

pletely into the hands of this subtle counsellor, than the observation she had made on William Curtis, joined to this tormenting recollection. It is certain that she had been often, very often puzzled by the young man's varying manner to her, and now it seemed as if fate had unexpectedly sent her a friend whose wisdom and experience might assist in dispersing the mystery which so grievously tortured her.

This idea had much more influence upon her than all Mrs. Vavasor's specious flattery; for, to say the truth, Miss Stanberry did not very greatly value the admiration of her own sex; she had never been popular among them, but easily reconciled herself to the fact, (of which she was perfectly conscious,) by remembering that the bad feelings of jealousy and envy were among the most powerful of our nature.

But now she welcomed the idea of possessing a female friend with so much eagerness, that much less dexterity of divination than was possessed by Sister Agatha might have sufficed to discover the species of usefulness that was expected of her. But this being ex-

actly everything which best suited her own projects, the cordial return which the young lady made to her advances was received with a sort of skilful grace, that produced precisely the effect she desired ; and Adelaide left Langley Knoll determined to suspend her judgment respecting the improbable statement about her cousin, till Mrs. Vavasor could assist her in forming it.

Fortunately for her impatient nature, there was no danger that there should be any lack of opportunity for this, for a perfect fever of hospitality appeared to have seized upon the whole neighbourhood; and before the party separated, there was not a single day, for more than a week to come, that was left without some arrangement that was to bring them all together again.

The portrait, or, rather, the slight sketch, given of William Mills, Esq., when he was first introduced to the reader, seated at his business-like breakfast-table, could scarcely be recognised as a likeness, by any one who saw him as he appeared at the dinner-table, and in the drawing-room of his beloved nephew.

He was dressed entirely in black, but the velvet waistcoat, and the well-cut coat did wonders for his tall and somewhat ill-built person, while the bland, yet animated expression of his features, created an irresistible wish to become acquainted with him.

The especial office assigned to Mrs. Vavasor on this occasion was performed in the very successful manner that has just been related. That of Mr. Stormont was two-fold, comprising the duties of an assiduous host to all, together with such peculiar attention to the poor fated Juliana, as might effectually carry on the plot for winning her "fair soul," and driving it in the direction in which the distant, but omnipotent Scaviatoli had determined that it should go.

The office assigned to Mr. Mills was special also, though the execution of it demanded so extended an exertion of ability, as to make it seem universal. It was his to give the tone to the whole establishment. Mr. Stormont was too young a man to do this; though decidedly a person of good fortune, and decidedly a gentleman, and decidedly a man of taste and

accomplishments, he was still too young to carry with him that species of influence which settles all doubts, questions, and conjectures at once, by the irresistible weight of personal authority.

But not so Mr. Mills. He was an old gentleman of commanding intellect, finished manners, and of the most kind and courteous demeanour. To doubt that he was all he seemed to be, would have betrayed great ignorance of everything most essential to the true tone of good society; for what he *seemed* to be, was nothing that could be assumed at will; it *must* belong to the individual in whom it is found. Nobody can *affect* to be an old gentleman of commanding intellect, and finished manners. Like the water in the diamond, if it be there at all, it must be genuine. Brightness and a smooth surface may be simulated: but this is only good for "the groundlings."

Mr. Mills *was* all that he seemed to be to the ladies and gentlemen who had the pleasure of making his acquaintance at Langley Knoll; but that he was something besides is equally true, and their not finding it out, left no im-

putation on their intellect. The time is not yet come when an old gentleman of *peculiarly* finished manners, commanding intellect, and the *most* kind and courteous demeanour, is likely to be remarked, as being probably a Jesuit.

So the success of Mr. Mills, notwithstanding his ungainly person and large features, was as complete as that of his coadjutors. Let me render the effect he produced, by repeating the various judgments pronounced upon him by his new acquaintance. It will be more intelligible than a mere summary, and will not delay us much longer. The speeches were not all made at one and the same meeting; but that matters not.

Mrs. Rowley—"I am pretty well sure the gentleman has been in parliament. I haven't forgot the sort of look, and the kind of way, those gents had, when my poor dear husband used to give a grand dinner to a set of them. I never used to talk much myself, but I wasn't asleep neither."

Lady Setterton—"I never considered the House of Commons, taken altogether, as any-

thing very particular in the way of good manners. It is much more likely that he has been an ambassador. They *do* get a manner, even when they are not noble."

Lady Margaret—"Old men are my abhorrence! I don't know anything on earth so detestable! But I am quite ready to confess that Mr. Mills is an exception. I dare say Mamma is right. I dare say he *has* been an ambassador."

Had Mr. Mills chanced to overhear these two last speakers, and deemed it advisable to give them a sincere reply, he would probably have said, "Yes, ladies, from heaven to earth. And if you will employ me, I will change sides, and be your envoy from earth to heaven."

Lady Louisa—"I don't know why one should set oneself so violently against old men. If Mr. Mills would make a good settlement upon me, I would take him to-morrow."

1st *Mr. Rowley*—"That is not a man to be sneezed at. I would bet upon him, let him undertake the wildest spec: that ever was made."

2nd *Mr. Rowley*—"If we were living in the old times that I was reading about the other day, I should say that he was the court astrologer."

3rd *Mr. Rowley*—"No, James; if old times were come back again, I should suspect that he was a monarch travelling in disguise."

4th *Mr. Rowley*—"Not a bit of it. Depend upon it, he is a man of very large fortune. There is nothing to be done without that. And then he has first-rate abilities, and has lived among people of fashion, with his eyes open."

Mr. Wardour—"Mr. Mills is an extraordinary man. He has an immense deal in him, and the additional advantage of being perfectly gentleman-like. I really hope we shall see a good deal of him."

Lady Sarah—"Indeed, I hope so. The meeting such a man as that must be quite a treat to you, Mr. Wardour. Do you not think he is delightful, Julia?"

Miss de Morley—(colouring a good deal). "Upon my word, Mamma, I do not know. I did not observe him particularly. But per-

haps I may see more of him another time. I am sure I should like to do so, very much indeed."

Mr. Raymond—"Upon my soul, I never met such a man in my life as that Mr. Mills. I used to think that I knew a little about bibliography myself, but I am positively a baby with a horn-book, compared with him. Yet there is nothing fusty-musty about him, either. He told me that he often played a rubber of whist, too. Positively he is the most capital fellow I have seen for this many a day. I shall vote for his turning his nephew out, and taking possession in his stead! The young man is very handsome, and musical, and all that, but the old one is the very ace of trumps."

Miss Raymond—"You are right, sir, it would not be easy to match him. He has promised to come and look at my mare. Upon my life, the young men must look about them, or he will put all their noses out of joint. Talk of the nephew! He is not fit to hold his stirrup for him."

Mrs. Stanberry—"What a kind, sweet-

tempered, gentle, obliging person that good Mr. Mills seems to be! I declare that he took as much care of me, and seemed as anxious about my not getting cold from sitting in the draught of the window, as if he had been my own father. It is so seldom that one sees men, now-a-days, so thoroughly polite, and attentive as he is. He has got the way of making one see that he likes one."

Adelaide — "Yes! They are remarkable people, all of them. I think he has a good deal of Mrs. Vavasor's enchanting manner. They are first cousins, I believe."

Mr. Curtis — "I don't know what the deuce was in me yesterday. I know, well enough, that I am generally expected to be as sulky as a bear to strangers, but this old man contrived to set me talking like a magpie. Fancy, my being led on, William, till I found myself entering at full length into my rather particular opinions, respecting the red lady at Rome. Egad, there is a charm in talking to him, as well as in listening to him, I think."

William Curtis — "I don't know, sir, how you got time to talk so much to him. It

seemed to me that everybody was trying to get at him. Even those silly Letchmeer girls seemed enchanted when he began talking to them; and, as for myself, I felt, when I listened to him, as if it were abominable waste of time to listen to any one else—his language is so peculiarly beautiful.”

Mrs. Curtis—“ Yes, it is, William. But what struck me most, was the spirit of benevolence which seemed to breathe in every word he uttered. You need not be annoyed, *Mr. Curtis*, at remembering anything you said to him. Whether it was about the Pope, or the Pretender, it matters not, his kind spirit would listen with gentle charity to it all. You would never get him to say a harsh word against any one. It is impossible to mistake such a character as his.”

The good people of Cuthbert did not know it, but they were, one and all of them, giving little touches of very faithful pencils, which, taken altogether, made up the portrait of a Jesuit. The angels in heaven might not have recognised it, but Father Scaviatoli would.

As to the effect upon Juliana de Morley, which these hours passed under the roof of Mr. Stormont produced, it is no easy matter to describe it. The rooms at Langley Knoll, and the whole aspect of the place, and of everything belonging to it, was in a style so very inferior to that of her own stately castle and its appurtenances, that the contrast did strike her as being *objectionably* strong; but she had not long remained under its humble roof, ere the thought, that *such* a thought had arisen within her, made her heart beat, and her cheeks glow with shame and self-contempt. "Alas ! it is I who am not worthy to raise my thoughts so infinitely above myself, as to hope for the proud distinction of becoming his wife !" was the mental ejaculation which followed; and for a few moments she looked, and listened, with a degree of much dejection in her countenance and manner, which produced a great, but strangely-mixed emotion in the heart of Stormont. There was something so like the resigned gentleness of *professed* devotion in her beautiful eyes, as she raised them to his, that almost in the same instant he

“crossed himself in his heart,” and breathed a thanksgiving for so heavenly a state of mind in a being, for whose vocation and acceptance as a Spouse of Christ, it was a part of his daily routine of duty to pray—and felt his soul sink within him at the proof it gave, that all his presumptuous fears of having been too pleasing in her eyes were vain and needless! But he had too firm a purpose, and too steadfast a spirit, to give way before a pang like that; and, reckless of the anguish that it cost him, he hailed it as a proof that he might fearlessly go on, and without scruple obey the injunctions he had received, to obtain such influence on her mind, as might enable him to lead it in whatever direction he pleased.

And then it was, in truth, with a reckless sort of defiance of every peril, save that of DISOBEDIENCE, that from this moment, to that of her departure, he devoted all the powers of his bright and various talents to enchant her. Poor Juliana! The cup of Comus might have been offered to her without danger. But ere she left Langley Knoll, she had *very* resolutely returned to the conviction that, loving its

master as she did love him, it would be a frightful sin to permit any motive that the earth could offer, to make her become the wife of any other man.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM this time, a very constant and intimate intercourse was carried on between the accomplished inhabitants of Langley Knoll, and the various families constituting the aristocratic society of the parish of Cuthbert. That thorough acquaintance with the human heart which was possessed by the newly-arrived addition to this society, and which certainly was not the least important part of their accomplishments, taught them to know, that though Authority often is, and always should be, a very simple machine, Influence is a very complicated one, and that, in order to make it effective, no operation of which it is capable should be neglected. The latter is used like the melting furnace, which renders the ore malleable; and then comes the former,

with its powerful pressure, and stamps the form which it is to wear, thenceforward, and for ever.

The only one, however, of all the gay throng amongst which the influence of the strangers was at work in full activity—the only one amongst them considered of sufficient consequence to be wrought into a fitting state for receiving the impress of their more than imperial Rome, was Juliana. All their operations, in whatever direction they were employed in the first instance, were intended to produce their final result on her; nor did any trouble, any watchfulness, any attention, appear either too great, or too little, for them to resort to, in order to achieve their great object.

It soon became evident to the piercing eye of Mrs. Vavasor, that Juliana's affection for her mother would be their most dangerous stumbling-block.

Mrs. Vavasor was quite as fully aware as poor Juliana herself, and greatly more so than either of her male companions, that the unhappy girl was deeply, passionately, enamoured of Father Eustace; nor had she any doubt,

when his real position should be revealed to her, that in this, as in many similar cases on record, the first refuge to which she would turn in her misery, would be the cloister.

As to her conversion, though it had by no means been wrought out by the ordinary routine of controversy, doubt, enthusiasm, and conversion, the reports of Father Eustace upon the tendency of all the many interviews which had taken place between them were far too satisfactory to leave any fears as to the result, upon the mind of either; but in all their discussions on the subject, Sister Agatha invariably recurred to the same point, and pretty nearly to the same words, "*But I still doubt if she would consent to forsake her mother.*"

It was not very long, however, before her fertile and *well-cultivated* mind produced an idea that, when disclosed to Father Edgar, and skilfully followed out between them, into all its probable and possible results, appeared likely to remove all their difficulties.

The attack made upon the heart and the confidence of Miss Stanberry, had by no means

been made at random; for, in the first place, she had been pointed out by Father Eustace as a girl of violent passions, and overbearing character, who was galled by doubts, and by no means idle ones, whether the love she had so unreservedly given were returned; and in the second, the jealousy which these doubts engendered, seemed disposed to fix itself, whether right or wrong, upon the important ONE who was the Alpha and Omega of all their operations.

This was quite enough to point her out as a person of whom it behoved them to get possession.

But although, upon farther acquaintance with this young lady, the propriety of doing so became greatly more obvious, from the proofs which every fresh conversation with her elicited, of her dauntless, and unprincipled character, it took Mrs. Vavasor some time to read aright the real state of her affairs, and what the circumstances of them were upon which she could best hitch her hopes of making her useful.

It was at Cuthbert Castle that the trio of

Langley Knoll first saw, and made acquaintance with Fanny Clarence. Having once got herself introduced, in the manner already related, to the mother of Fanny, Lady Sarah de Morley found no farther difficulty in gratifying the earnest wishes of her daughter, by inducing Mrs. Clarence and Mrs. Stanberry to permit Fanny's frequent visits at the castle. Nay, even Adelaide herself, moved either by the very common feeling that it was best to know the worst at once, or else, by the better-late-than-never conviction, that her scheme for hiding her beautiful cousin could not continue—moved either by one or both these feelings, even Adelaide herself ceased to make any objection to her going either there, or anywhere else, where Mrs. Stanberry proposed to take her.

This altered state of affairs induced Lady Sarah, and Juliana likewise, very earnestly to advise their young favourite to alter also the plan which had been previously decided upon, respecting the time and the manner of communicating the attachment between herself and William Curtis, to his parents. The same good gifts bestowed by Nature upon poor

Fanny, which had produced such a fit of fear in the breast of her cousin, had produced as strong a feeling of hope in that of the friendly Lady Sarah.

“Let my dear friend, Mrs. Curtis, and her good husband too, but learn to know you, Fanny, as well as we know you,” she said, “and the avowal of William will not be ill received, depend upon it.”

Fanny yielded to this advice, because she was too much terrified at the idea of the application for their consent, not to rejoice at the thought of postponing it. And her lover yielded with equal readiness, from believing that Lady Sarah was perfectly right, and that to know Fanny, must be of necessity to love her.

And thus it happened, that many days passed without any circumstance occurring which could either disprove or confirm the assertion of William Curtis’s attachment to her daughter, which Mrs. Clarence had so bluntly made to Adelaide. Had matters stood then, as they did afterwards, her sincerity would not so easily have got the better of her

discretion, for the latter might have been respected, without sacrificing the former.

But in fact, the very bluntness of her sincerity had been an antidote against its mischief. Adelaide did not in her heart believe it possible that, had her words been true, she would have *dared* to utter them. She knew herself, at least, if no one else did, how terrible would be the wrath and the vengeance to which such a fact would have driven her; and she did not, and truly could not, believe but that, whatever the origin of the fable, a fable it must be.

This blissful delusion, however, was not doomed to last long, and it was the voice of Mrs. Vavasor that chased it.

Though it was pretty well agreed, on all sides, that the season for pic-nics was over, there was one favourite point of view upon a little woody hill, that overhung the river, at the distance of about four miles from Cuthbert, to which it was proposed, by Juliana, that the Langley Knoll party should be invited to accompany them.

The scheme was immediately adopted very

zealously, and so far enlarged, that Mrs. Curtis, her son William, and Fanny Clarence, who was then passing a few permitted days at the castle, were invited to join them.

The weather was delicious, and the hill-side as safe and pleasant to sit upon, while looking down upon the pretty winding of the clear little stream at their feet, as if it had been June, instead of October.

Did any one ever hear of two lovers sitting down upon the side of a hill, in order to contemplate a pretty landscape spread out before them, without finding themselves betrayed into diversifying the amusement, by looking a little at each other?

At any rate, William Curtis and Fanny Clarence were not so forbearing; and the following conversation, which took place in Miss Stanberry's dressing-room the next morning, was the first fruit of their indiscretion.

It was not the first time that Mrs. Vavasor had made her way to this sacred retreat, though few indeed were the persons permitted to enter it; and she had been made so well aware of this, that though she knew her busi-

ness would ensure her a very eager hearing, if not exactly a hearty welcome, she did not sit down beside her young friend without making an apology for having entered the room, unauthorized by a special permission.

"But I was too anxious to see you, my lovely Adelaide," she added, "to risk the chance of a refusal. Are you sufficiently at leisure to be able to listen to me?"

"Do you not know, my dearest Mrs. Vavasor," replied the young lady, "that there is no employment I would not resign, and no companion whom I would not dismiss, rather than lose the pleasure of seeing you?"

"Bless you, my sweet love!" returned the graceful old lady, taking her by the hand, and looking fondly in her face. "Would to Heaven that I had *that* to tell, which might reward you for giving me so sweet a welcome!"

"You know something about Curtis!" cried Adelaide, eagerly. "Tell me what it is at once! Tell me instantly!"

"I will, dearest—I will!" returned her friend, in a tone of deep feeling. "Sit down beside me, my dear child, and you shall hear all."

Adelaide mechanically seated herself, and with clasped hands, and eyes fixed upon the lips of her companion, as if she would have caught the meaning of her words before their sound could reach her ears, she awaited her doom.

The voice of Mrs. Vavasor was low, and her enunciation measured and deliberate, as she said, "Adelaide, have you ever seen your cousin, Miss Clarence, and Mr. William Curtis, in each other's company?"

"It is not possible!" shrieked, rather than spoke Adelaide, in reply. "Oh! tell me not THAT! Let it be anything, everything but THAT!"

"Very ill, my poor child, should I deserve the precious title of *friend*, which you have bestowed upon me, could I be base enough to shrink from giving you pain, and suffer you, instead of it, to endure a life of miserable delusion. I told you, Adelaide, that it was not the heiress of Cuthbert whom young Curtis loved, and who had basely crept into his heart, to the exclusion of her who had once possession of it. No, Adelaide, it is not

Juliana de Morley who has done you this cruel wrong! It is your own blood relation!—a snake that you have harboured in your home! It is the gentle-seeming, but most perfidious Fanny Clarence!”

It was not by words that Adelaide Stanberry made her first reply to this terrible announcement.

She clenched her fists till her nails entered the palms of her hands. Her eyes glared frightfully, her teeth were set, and her finely-formed nostril dilated itself, as we see it in the classic statues of old Greece.

For a few moments she was very truly unable to speak, and Mrs. Vavasor, though the emotion was little more vehement than she expected, and perhaps desired, was so far alarmed, that she rose from her side, and brought both cold water and a bottle of salts, to restore her frightfully shaken nerves.

A few moments sufficed to achieve this, sufficiently to enable the very truly wretched beauty to imbibe all the gall and bitterness which her affectionate new friend came for the express purpose of distilling upon her.

That her case was one of those included under the general appellation of *love*, is quite certain; but anything less like the symptoms and demonstrations of that gentle passion, according to the *beau ideal* we are most of us accustomed to form of it, is scarcely conceivable.

Had the highly-favoured William Curtis been at that moment sufficiently unlucky to have been within reach of this bright-eyed Megara, he would have had but small chance of escaping without some sort of personal injury; and as to the pretty cause of all her woe, it may be doubted whether, if the pleasure of mounting a throne had at that moment been offered to her in exchange for the gratification of trampling Fanny under her feet, she would, though rather fond of principalities and powers, have had sufficient command over herself to accept it.

But Mrs. Vavasor had not only the power of reading the human heart, she possessed also that of turning over its leaves at her pleasure. Having carefully perused the page that bore the record of rage, and raving, she skilfully turned

to another, in order to discover how much of the active spirit of revenge she could find; and then again to another, in order to ascertain whether there was as much firmness, as fury, and whether, if taken under every point of view, the impassioned fair one might be trusted as an agent in mischief, which might have, though unknown to her, an object more important than that of punishing a young gentleman for not knowing his own mind.

She had, upon the whole, great reason to be satisfied with what she found, and she set to work accordingly.

“The treatment you have received, Miss Stanberry,” she said, with the deliberate slowness of a person who knows he is speaking on matters which permit not of jesting—“the treatment you have received, both from the young man himself, and, still more, from the ungrateful viper whom you have suffered to creep beneath the shelter of your roof, both cry aloud, not only for indignation, but for punishment! Nor do I believe that in this case the good effects of punishment need be limited to the mere performance of an act of re-

tributive justice. If properly employed, I feel confident that the evil committed, may not only be punished, but repaired. But this cannot be achieved by any slight, weak, wavering movement of indignation; it can only be the result of that highest species of moral courage which is not only capable of imagining a noble act of justice, but of performing it."

"What result? What say you may be repaired?" returned Adelaide, positively gasping from the excess of her impatience to have this question answered.

"Adelaide Stanberry!" said Mrs. Vavasor, solemnly, "the great acts of human life, and the great passions of the human heart, are not performed or regulated by the hot sallies of a galled spirit, but by the deliberate resolution of a steadfast will. Before I confide to you the thoughts which have been suggested by the iniquitous conduct of which it is intended that you should be the victim, and also, *mark me*, by other circumstances which I have witnessed since I have been amongst you here—I say, Adelaide Stanberry, that before I confide to you the thoughts which these things have

suggested, and for which I believe that I can find a remedy, you must give me a very solemn promise that you will trust to me, to my judgment, and to my experience, when your own fail. Act by me as faithfully as, if you deserve it, I will act by you, and William Curtis shall again be at your feet."

Scarcely were these words pronounced before Adelaide was on her knees before Mrs. Vavasor, clasping her hands, and kissing them with a vehemence of joy and gratitude that spoke well for the sincerity of the promise which she uttered, to do all and everything which the guardian angel before whom she knelt, should dictate to her.

Mrs. Vavasor looked down upon her working features, and saw in their expression enough to convince her that she had but to pull the right strings, in order to make the agent she had chosen a very effective one.

"Now, then, I think we understand each other," said Mrs. Vavasor, raising her from the footstool on which she had knelt, and placing her on a chair opposite to her. "But there are still," she continued, "some cir-

cumstances to be explained, my dear, before it is possible that you should comprehend what it is that I am about to demand of you, in return for the services I have offered to render. Our confidence must be mutual, Adelaide. Do you now feel sufficiently composed to listen to me?"

"Do I not know," replied Adelaide, "that I am bound to listen to you, not only from gratitude but interest? And what an interest! Gracious Heaven! my very heart seems on fire within me! Go on, Mrs. Vavasor—go on!"

"I must go back first, my dear," replied Mrs. Vavasor, with a caressing smile. "Do not be startled by my asking you a question, which at first may seem very foreign to the business before us. It will all help our progress at last. Tell me, my dear, if it has been your mother's plan to bring you up very strictly as a Protestant? Have you been taught to believe that all Roman-catholics are monsters?"

There was a blank look on the features of Adelaide as she listened to this most unexpected question, which *almost* produced a smile

on those of Mrs. Vavasor. It spoke, fifty times plainer than any words could have done, that the subject she had now introduced was one upon which she had never bestowed a thought, and in which she took not the very slightest interest.

Sister Agatha understood her business a great deal too well to attempt doing two things at once; and therefore, though of course very dreadfully shocked at finding the soul of her admired young friend in a state of such imminent peril, she did not think it just then advisable to address any remonstrance to her on the subject; but without waiting for any farther reply to her question, she went on.

“ I will not, at this moment, attempt to enter upon a subject greatly too important to be mixed up with any other, though I cannot but feel that yours is one of those high-toned and commanding minds, which never, when once the thoughts have been seriously turned to the subject, will be satisfied with any but the true faith. You will die a Catholic, my noble Adelaide; you are made for such a faith, and the faith was made for such as you.”

“My grandmother was a Roman lady and a Roman-catholic,” replied Adelaide, awakened to a feeling of interest by the flattering words and impressive manner of her companion. “But let us talk of that another time.”

“We will, my love,” replied Mrs. Vavasor, gravely. “But from what I have said already, you must be aware that I myself am of that holy faith. And now, Adelaide, you must listen to the very important secret, by the disclosure of which I am about to repay your confidence in me. You already know that the father of Miss de Morley was a Catholic?”

“Oh, yes!” replied Adelaide; “everybody here knows that.”

“The late Richard Randolphe de Morley was one of the most admirable of men,” resumed Mrs. Vavasor, “and as faithful a Catholic as ever glorified the church of Christ; and sorely does that church, and our blessed Father the Pope at its head, lament that his only child should be a heretic. I have promised not to enter at large upon the painful subject now, and I will not, farther than to tell you that the restoring Juliana de Morley to the religion

of her ancestors is to me an object as dear and as important as the recovering the love of William Curtis is to you."

"But how can I aid you in this? Tell me, teach me, dearest Mrs. Vavasor!" cried Adelaide, almost instinctively comprehending that the mutual confidence included a mutual aid, as its condition and consequence. "There is nothing, oh! nothing that I would not do to further your object, could I but understand how it was possible!"

"Trust to me, Adelaide, as to the making it possible," replied Mrs. Vavasor, with a very intelligible movement of the head, which clearly expressed that she knew what she was about. "The present state of the case is this. It cannot be necessary that I should tell you, Miss Stanberry, that the very slightest syllable being breathed by you on this subject to any human being but myself, would plunge you into a depth of misery that it would be more easy for me to produce, than for you to endure."

Adelaide trembled, as her eyes fixed themselves on Mrs. Vavasor while she pronounced

these words. It was then, for the first time, that she felt conscious that she was putting herself into the power of one whose spirit would be the master of her own; and had the hopes which she held out to her been of any kind less vitally important to the passion which enslaved her, she would have been likely enough to have broken up the conference, by a pretty stern declaration that she would not be threatened, nor submit to live under the fear of any soul alive.

But the image of William Curtis, restored to all his enchanting little *agaceries* on one side, and that of Fanny Clarence grovelling in all the humiliation of disappointment on the other, overpowered both her pride and her courage; and after closing her eyes for a moment, as if to recover her routed self-possession, she replied, "Mrs. Vavasor, do not speak to me so. It is not necessary."

"That answer is worthy of you, Adelaide Stanberry; it is reasonable, and very exactly to the purpose. Now, then, to resume what I was about to say, when my unnecessary fit of caution stopped me. The present state of the

case, my dear child, is this. I have every reason to believe that Juliana de Morley is already in her heart a Catholic. Nay, more than this, much more. I have very good reason to believe, also, that were it not for the opposition of her mother, or rather, were it not for the dreadfully ill-placed affection of this deluded girl for this unworthy mother, she would not only gratify the truly paternal feelings of the Pope for her salvation, by declaring herself Catholic, but would willingly become a nun of the blessed order of the Sacred Heart, and thereby atone to the offended church for the sin of her father in uniting himself to an heretic. Do you understand me, my dear child?"

"I understand most perfectly every word you say to me," replied Adelaide, "but not what it is that you wish me to do in the business."

"That shall follow in its place, my dear," rejoined the hidden nun. "But first answer me one question. Have you never observed, dear Adelaide, the very remarkable, the very extraordinary, the very objectionable intimacy

subsisting between Lady Sarah de Morley and the heretic priest of her parish? Has it never struck you that, considering her having a grown-up daughter, there was something very detestable in the love-making perpetually going on between them?"

"I am afraid, Mrs. Vavasor," replied Adelaide, with very perfect sincerity, "I have been too much occupied by thinking of other people's love, to pay any attention to that of the Rector, for a lady as old as himself, almost."

"That is quite natural, my dear," replied the nun; "but this stupid blindness must continue no longer. I make it an essential part of our engagement with each other that you should observe the manners of these two sinful creatures to each other. And mark me, Adelaide! My conviction is—and I should not go too far to say that I *know* it to be true—my firm conviction is, that they are *lovers*, in the worst sense of the word. In short, I am convinced that Lady Sarah de Morley is living in defiance of all the laws of God and man, and that it is the duty of her daughter to insist upon her immediate marriage with her lover.

After which, it is more than likely that her outraged feelings—for outraged, unquestionably, they must be—will lead her to take refuge in the only really safe and happy asylum which the earth has to offer. In making this disclosure to Miss de Morley, Adelaide, you will have fulfilled all the conditions required of you in return for the efforts which I shall make to separate your snake-like cousin from your lover, and to restore him to you, contrite and ashamed of his boyish wavering, and more full of admiration and love for you, than ever he was before this folly—which he shall soon learn to blush for—bewildered his judgment and his heart.”

Adelaide drew a long deep sigh; but it was not a sigh of despondence. A soft and languid smile, and a sort of languishing expression in her full dark eye, showed a happier feeling.

“And may I not ask,” she said, after enjoying for a delicious moment or two the image that had been conjured up before her—“may I not ask in what manner it is that you propose to bring about this blessed change?”

Mrs. Vavasor did not immediately reply

but sat gazing at her for a minute or two, as if delightedly contemplating her beauty; but it is just possible that she was also balancing in her mind the safest mode of replying to the question which the beauty had put to her. She would greatly have preferred, had the thing been possible, to have answered in a manner that might have been described in the words of Shakespeare—

“She speaks, yet she says nothing;”

but, taking into consideration the very ardent temperament of the individual she had to deal with, she came to the conclusion that this was *not* possible, and therefore replied:—

“The manner in which I intend to influence, and make steady, the mind of William Curtis, is precisely the same, my dear, that I suggested for your use, in the case of Miss de Morley. I shall take care that the parents of Mr. William Curtis are made aware of the fact that your cousin, Miss Fanny Clarence, has not so conducted herself, as to deserve the honour of becoming their daughter-in-law.”

Adelaide did not look satisfied.

“I greatly fear, Mrs. Vavasor,” said she,

“that William Curtis does not stand in such awe of his parents, as to make him yield any fancy to such a remonstrance.—Nay, I protest to you that I do not think it at all improbable that they should be inclined to look with rather a favourable eye upon a girl whose only fault, as it would be so easy to prove, was her love for him.”

Mrs. Vavasor smiled, rose from her seat, playfully parted the dark curls of her beautiful companion, and replied, “If you have no other reason to fear a failure in your scheme of happiness, than what arises from your doubts concerning the effective nature of the measures which I intend to take to ensure it, you may sleep in peace, fair Adelaide.”

This was very vague; yet, somehow or other, it brought a strange sort of confidence to the mind of Adelaide; and it brought also a feeling which was equally in accordance with the wishes of Sister Agatha, namely, a very decided resolution not to inquire any farther into her ways, and means, of bringing about the object which she had promised to achieve.

CHAPTER V.

MR. MILLS had, from the first time of their meeting, made a very favourable impression upon old Mr. Curtis. The most popular opinion amongst the many friends of this last-named gentleman was, that he was a sensible, and an honourable man, but “as surly as a bear.”

Popular opinion, notwithstanding occasional blunderings, is generally in the right; and so it was here. Mr. Curtis, who was a man of sterling learning, and of sterling worth, had been thrown by fate, and the local position of his fine estate, into a very frivolous neighbourhood. As far as he was himself concerned, it would have been better to have done “as others use,” and have spent one quarter of the year, and three-quarters of his income, in London; for then he would have been jostled about, and

mixed up with his equals, and superiors, both in wealth and intellect: but he had a strong notion that this was not the best way of doing his duty in that state of life in which God had placed him. Instead of this, he had continued, with the exception of a few distant visits, "short and far between," to inhabit his ancestral mansion, from the time he had taken possession of it, to the present day; and one reason for his having so freely permitted the long rambles of his son upon the continent was, that he might, when his time of possession came, follow the same course, without feeling the regret of which he was himself occasionally conscious, on account of having seen so very small a portion of the earth's surface beyond the boundary of his own park.

That this manner of disposing of himself, of his excellent wife, and excellent income, had been productive of all the usefulness he intended to his poor neighbours in general, and his own tenants and workmen in particular, is very certain; but that it had produced a disagreeable effect upon his own manners, is equally so. He certainly was very superior, both in point of intellect and information, to the generality of his neighbours, including

many more distant families, who, from not having been in any way connected with the events of my story, have been carefully left out of it; but unfortunately he was superior also in wealth, for, with the single exception of De Morley, he was the largest landed proprietor in that part of the country.

This circumstance naturally procured for him a good deal of attention and civility, and the tracing this effect to its cause, which unluckily he was too apt to do, ended by producing the bruin-like surliness for which he was renowned. In the case of the one exception to his superiority in wealth, it was worse still; for he hated the "Red Lady" and her lover, as he disrespectfully called the Pope, with considerably more of zeal than of Christian tolerance; and thus he was left, if not alone in his glory, at least so often wishing to be so, that the general censure passed upon his manners was not much more severe than they deserved.

But in Mr. Mills he had found a man whom it was impossible he could suppose either knew, or cared, anything about the size of his estate, and yet who paid him very marked attention,

evidently for the sole pleasure of conversing with him.

The conviction of this fact was almost as agreeable as it was rare, and the consequence of it was, that Mr. Mills was not only treated with marked attention and civility at all the social gatherings that brought the Cuthbert neighbourhood together, but was, moreover, invited to more than one *tête-à-tête* ride, and complimented with a general invitation to make use of his library, and all it contained, as long as he remained in the neighbourhood.

All this, joined to a very strong inclination on the part of the stranger to find out all he could concerning the *influential Huguenot*, had led to such a degree of intimacy, and frequent intercourse, as to render it a very easy task for the concealed Jesuit to infuse any "leprous distilment" that he might think proper into the porches of the worthy squire's ears.

And as this was, from the first, as well known to Sister Agatha as it now is to the reader, she had a very fair right to feel certain that the always easy task of inventing a slander, was all that remained for her to do, in order to fulfil her engagement with Adelaide;

the mode of conveying it in an influential manner to the influential quarter (always the most difficult part of such a business) being already most satisfactorily provided for.

Notwithstanding Mrs. Vavasor's just confidence, however, in her own almost unlimited powers of invention, she never lost sight of the fact, that probability was as necessary for rendering a lie effective, as a correct costume to the personification of a character on the stage; and she therefore sought an early and perfectly private interview with her cousin, in order to consult him as to the best mode of obtaining a few such anecdotal hints concerning Fanny Clarence, as might assist her in giving a natural air to the romance she was about to compose.

This interview was a long and important one, for it decided the coadjutors upon a still bolder line of conduct than they had at first projected. Father Eustace had been just undergoing a very strict, and a very clever examination by *his uncle*, as to the probable state of the heiress's feelings towards him; and a far duller man than Father Edgar could not have failed to perceive, that amidst all the resolute sincerity with which poor Stormont told all,

which, but for his fearful vow, he would have yielded up his life rather than reveal, he still did not avow all that he himself endured from the passion he had conceived for his beautiful convert.

“That up to a certain point he will be true to us,” said Father Edgar, “I have not the slightest doubt; for education has made him a good Jesuit, though nature fights hard to turn him into a bad one. For instance, he will never yield up his duty to the Holy Company for the sake of any possible happiness to himself, but I strongly doubt if any principle derived from that duty would lead him, perhaps I ought to say would *enable* him, to sacrifice her in the manner in which, as we both know, a thoroughly good Jesuit ought to do, if the interests of the Company demand it. Nevertheless, he is far too important an agent in the business for us to dream of denouncing, and throwing him over; at any rate we have not done with him yet; and till we have, his deficiencies must only be noticed, in order to be guarded against. Where shall we find another to whom such a creature as Juliana de Morley could yield up her conscience, and her judgment, as she has done to him? In a word,

if we send him back to be disciplined into greater perfection of obedience, at his convent, what are we to do without him?"

"Nothing!" replied Mrs. Vavasor, very decidedly—"absolutely nothing."

"Voilà, belle Emilie, à quel point nous en sommes,"

rejoined Mr. Mills. "We have, at least, however, the comfort and advantage of being of the same opinion; a consolation which, to say truth, generally has attended our labours. As to your particular portion of the affair, nothing can appear to go on more prosperous. It is clear that you have as completely the command of the fierce Adelaide's spirit, as Stormont has of that of the gentle Juliana; and I only wish that your pupil was the important personage, instead of his, for then we should have no troublesome scruples in any quarter to impede us."

"*Wishing* will do us no good, William!" returned Mrs. Vavasor, shaking her head; "and I greatly doubt if, with all his influence, Father Eustace would ever, even if he had wished it, have brought Juliana de Morley into a state so very nearly resembling that of Jesuitical discipline, as I have done with my

young beauty; and that, too, without having as yet touched, save more lightly than with a passing feather, on the enticing subject of religious faith."

"Yes—yes," returned Mr. Mills, "both agent, and object are superior in the Stanberry division of the business. Nor are the advantages to be gained in that direction to be undervalued, Sister Agatha. Notwithstanding our misgivings about Stormont, I have little fear but that we shall at last obtain the great object."

"Which do you call so?" demanded Mrs. Vavasor, with a peculiar sort of smile, which called an answering smile equally peculiar to the face of Mr. Mills.

"Oh! of course, Amelia, I mean her becoming a nun."

"Nay! I could not tell, you know, whether it might not be her conversion to the Roman-catholic faith. But this, Stormont says, is done already, and if so, the other will be sure to follow. There are so many reasons, you know, for a woman's wishing to become a nun!"

"Yes," returned her cousin, with another smile.

“But, in order fully to profit by this, we must have no worldly-minded scruples among us.”

“True,” replied Sister Agatha, and for a few seconds she said no more; but then, raising her eyes from the ground, on which they had fixed themselves, she said—

“I want a little assistance, Mr. Mills, in deciding what species of romance it will be best to fabricate, in order to convince your dear friend, Mr. Curtis, senior, that disgrace and destruction, for evermore, will fall upon his race, if he permits his inconstant son’s present flame, the innocent-looking little Fanny Clarence, to become his wife. What *can* we say against her that will be of sufficient importance, and yet, in any degree, credible?”

“Oh! the old story, Amelia. She must love—frail, of course,” returned Father Edgar. “That may be true, you know, for anything that we can tell. But should I go to him, in my very best and most approved manner, and tell him that she had committed murder, or picked a pocket, the thing would contradict itself.”

“But she looks so very young, William!” argued Mrs. Vavasor.

“Never mind that. I should really be sorry

to over-fatigue you, my dear friend, but you must excuse me for saying that it must be your fair self, and nobody else, who must, either by help of her cousin, or the servants, or, in short, in some way or other, you *must* find out who she sees, and where she goes, and what she does, that may give a peg upon which to hang our well-intentioned romance. Besides, Amelia, after all, you must perceive that the ultimate result of this part of the business matters very little. It is absolutely essential to *our* great object that Miss de Morley should be convinced, and with as little loss of time as possible, that her mother has disgraced herself; and in order to bring this statement to her ears, by means of one of their own society, and not from any rumours circulated by such strangers as ourselves, it is quite worth our while to purchase this advantage, by taking the trouble of abusing the pretty rival of our agent, in the hearing of her lover's father. But it by no means follows that, as a matter of necessity, our statement must be so consistent as to hold water long. What will it signify to us, should my esteemed new friend, Mr. Curtis, discover within four-and-twenty hours after I set off for Rome, and

you to your convent, that we had been quite mistaken, and most sadly deceived about that dear little injured innocence, Miss Fanny Clarence?"

"To be sure, William," replied the reasonable nun, "that is quite true. And who knows but that, in such a case, Miss Stanberry might come after us, and turn nun too? She has got a very pretty independent fortune of her own, and of course it is impossible she could make a better use of it."

The deep-set eyes of Mr. Mills twinkled upon her approvingly; and the friendly conversation went on to discuss the probable length of time which must still elapse before they could hope to bring their doubtless righteous, but not very easy scheme, to the desired conclusion. As far as Juliana was concerned, they both declared themselves persuaded that Miss Stanberry's statement respecting Lady Sarah, was all that was wanted to give her resolution at once to proclaim her change of faith. For this statement being duly made, Mrs. Vavasor declared herself responsible; but for the rest, she said, "it must all depend upon Father Eustace."

"Wholly and entirely!" returned Mr. Mills;

"and should he fail us," he added, sternly, "his example shall be made of some avail, whatever disappointment his renegade cowardice may cost us."

"Let us hope the best," said Sister Agatha.

"Yes, let us hope the best," replied Father Edgar. And with these words they parted; for the tall and graceful figure of Mr. Stormont at that moment became visible from the window of the room in which they were sitting, as he slowly returned from a long morning visit which he had been making at Cuthbert Castle.

CHAPTER VI.

UP to this time, no individual in the whole neighbourhood had conceived any suspicion that their new neighbour at Langley Knoll, or his guests either, professed any other religious faith but their own.

The house was in the parish of Cuthbert, and a large, handsome, and conspicuous pew in the parish church was appropriated to the use of its inhabitants. In this pew Mr. Stormont had never failed to appear—always once, and sometimes twice every Sunday; and when his respectable uncle and cousin arrived, they did so likewise. Far, therefore, from there being anything remarkable in the fact that nobody but Juliana de Morley and her old house-keeper suspected the truth, it would have been greatly more remarkable if they had.

Soon after Juliana had become acquainted with

the real state of the case, both respecting Mr. Stormont and her father's faithful old servant, (who had submitted to this concealment for years, rather than cease to inhabit the same dwelling with him and his only child,) she began to feel considerable uneasiness at the idea of suffering her mother to remain in ignorance of the fact; but the fear of destroying the happiness of the faithful and truly worthy Hardwood, by betraying a secret, which, if disclosed, would, beyond all question, occasion her removal from the castle, kept her silent, though wavering as to the propriety of being so.

And then came the great and important change in her own opinions, or, to speak more correctly, in her own feelings. There was a something, of solemnity and holiness, connected with the religion of her father, which mixed with all her earliest recollections concerning him; and the total absence of all such feelings on the part of her mother, and the almost ostentatious display of this, far from weakening the reverential feelings of her daughter, had very decidedly tended to increase them.

Never did poor Lady Sarah exert herself particularly to expound some particularly important point of doctrine, in order to show

how widely different was the Church of Rome from the Church of England, without causing something like a pang to Juliana's heart.

Not, however, that for a moment any idea of doubting her mother's authority upon the point ever entered her head; but she thought, with a sort of pitying tenderness, of her melancholy father, because he *was* melancholy, and wished in the very bottom of her heart that her mother would say nothing about his being wrong.

This feeling decidedly increased upon her as she grew up, and very naturally grew stronger still after his death. The scene respecting the casket had made a deep impression on her; and it is quite certain, that in the whole course of her life she had never done anything at the remembrance of which she had so often or so deeply rejoiced, as at the part she had acted in it.

Yet still all this was entirely and merely a matter of feeling, and had no mixture whatever of reasoning or controversial preference in it. On the contrary, she shrunk from examining the subject from a sort of filial respect to both her parents; and if, while professedly an English Protestant, she did occasionally feel

a little extra tolerance towards Roman-catholics, it was only because she thought they had the weaker position, and wanted it.

It was not very extraordinary, therefore, that the emotion to which she had yielded in her father's chapel, startled and shocked her less, when she meditated upon it in the stillness of her own chamber, than if the change she felt, or fancied that she felt, had been more violent.

Nor was it possible for her, in her present state of mind, to listen so often as she now did to the voice of such a pleader for the "ancient faith" as Stormont, without falling deeper and deeper every day into the belief that his words were the words of truth; and far from mis-doubting the righteousness of the overt act which she meditated, of publicly acknowledging that she had passed from the religion of her mother, to that of her father, she daily and nightly blessed Heaven for having permitted this change to precede her marriage, and thereby saving her and the man she loved from the perils which had beset the married life of her parents, from having joined their hands, when, in one respect, at least, their hearts were far asunder.

Having once made up her mind on this important point, she would willingly have proclaimed the fact to her mother without delay, but refrained from doing so, because she greatly wished to make one agitating scene suffice for the avowal of her conversion, and of her intended marriage.

Of Stormont's devoted love she had not (how could she have?) the slightest doubt.

In the first place, it was in fact only too certain that he *did* love her, with a love as fondly devoted, though not as purely unmixed as her own. Then how was it possible that, while he sat beside her, with eyes that involuntarily, unconsciously spoke all the passionate adoration of his heart, it should ever occur to her that all he said, and all he did, was only for the purpose of so winning an influence over her, that he might at last be able to convince her that the very best thing she could do was to become a nun?

No, no; it was not possible. And doubtless it was for that reason that it did not happen.

Neither did the delay of the avowal she expected surprise one half so much as it pained her. She understood it, or at least fancied she did, poor girl! *perfectly*.

It was the difference in their worldly circumstances which kept him silent; his noble, generous, and most disinterested spirit shrunk from proposing to her a marriage which, in the eyes of those who knew them* not, might so naturally be considered as one of interest on his side.

And she loved him the better for this. It was impossible to do otherwise; nevertheless, she did begin to feel puzzled as to the manner in which she was to bring her little romance to its third volume.

The confidence between herself and her faithful old servant Hardwood was absolutely perfect and unbounded on the subject of religion; and Father Eustace had found no bad auxiliary in the old woman, upon many minor points of form and ceremony, of which his young neophyte was very profoundly ignorant. But on the subject of her love, of Mr. Stormont's love, and of the marriage which was, of course, to be its consequence, Juliana had as yet said nothing.

This reserve was the natural result of the sort of shyness which every young girl must feel on such a subject. Had Hardwood given the very slightest opening for such a confi-

dence, by hinting that she suspected what was going on, her young mistress would have been delighted; but as nothing of this kind occurred, the days wore on, and no advance towards an *éclaircissement* was made in any direction. To Fanny Clarence she had told everything, as frankly as Fanny Clarence had told everything to her. But this was very truly the confidence of friendship, and it went no farther.

At length the young heiress began to think that she should like to hear the worthy Hardwood's opinion on the position of affairs between herself and her lover. She felt that there would be great comfort in talking about Stormont, and his too delicate reserve, to one who knew him so well and valued him so highly, as the good housekeeper did; and besides, it was not perhaps quite impossible that the old woman might suggest some more fitting means than any which Juliana could think of, for putting an end to the very delicate, but very tormenting embarrassment, which must, as she thought, be equally tormenting to them both.

Accordingly, on the very day that the interview which has been described between Mrs. Vavasor and Adelaide took place, Miss de

Morley, upon some pretence or other, got Hardwood into the library with her, and after a few minutes of nervous hesitation, addressed her thus:—

“Sit down, dear Hardwood! I want to have five minutes’ conversation with you.”

The housekeeper obeyed without difficulty and without surprise. The secret which already existed between them relative to Juliana’s conversion, and which was not as yet shared even by Fanny Clarence, had led to too much interesting and familiar talk between them, for such a command to appear at all extraordinary.

“I wanted to say something to you about Mr. Stormont,” resumed Miss de Morley, as soon as her old friend had placed herself beside the fire; “for as yet, you know, Hardwood, I cannot speak of him confidentially to any one but you.”

“Of course, my dear young lady—of course you cannot,” replied the old woman; “and it is an honour, and a glory, and a blessing, to be held worthy of listening to you when you do speak of him. Often and often, Miss de Morley, in the deep silence of the night do I invoke the spirit of your sainted father to look

down upon the blessed change that has been wrought in the heart of his precious child by the means of that holy man. Nor does there a single hour of the day pass, without my returning thanks to the Blessed Virgin for having heard my prayer, and granted me lengthened life to see what I have seen."

"And do you think, Hardwood," said Juliana, while tears of very sweet emotion filled her eyes—"do you think, Hardwood, that if the spirit of my poor dear father looks down upon us, and sees what is passing here between Mr. Stormont and me, do you indeed think that it gives him pleasure?"

"Can I think otherwise?" returned the old woman, eagerly. "Is it not, of all the blessings that Heaven could send upon you, my dear, dear child, that which, living or dead, poor gentleman, he would rejoice at most?"

"My dear Hardwood, what good it does me to hear you say so!" returned Juliana, joyously. "And well it is, my dear good woman, that your words have such comfort in them; for, to tell you the truth, Hardwood, I fear that my dear mother will not see the thing in the same light that you do, or that my poor father might have done, had he been still alive. Tell

me, dear Hardwood, all you think about it. Do you not expect that she will be both sorry and angry?"

"Sorry, Miss de Morley, it is likely enough she may be, at seeing you do that which she, poor dear lady, never could be persuaded to do herself—namely, the looking for truth, and finding it. But angry she surely cannot be, at your following in the same path in which, for hundreds of years, your honourable ancestors have gone before you."

Juliana heaved a little sigh. Her counsellor had not touched the point which she feared would touch her mother's feelings the most nearly. She felt, however, that it was very natural Mrs. Hardwood should think the matter of conversion the most important part of the business, though it did not seem so to her; and she did not very well like the telling her, that it was not so much on that account, as on the apparent imprudence of her marriage with Mr. Stormont, that she feared her mother's anger. But, nevertheless, she was determined, that before they parted, Hardwood should not only be brought to speak her opinion, as to the manner in which Lady Sarah was likely to receive this intelligence, but should also give her

such counsel as her sound good sense was likely to suggest, as to the best manner of announcing it.

Having, therefore, twisted a little cameo ring, that she wore upon her finger, round, and round, and round, for several minutes, she at last took courage to speak upon the tenderest of all tender subjects, and said, "There is great reason in what you say, Hardwood, about the faith I have chosen having been that of my ancestors, and I feel that I could boldly plead this in my defence. That noble-looking cardinal up-stairs, so like my own poor father! I will take my mother to look at him, and the gentle expression of that well-known face will plead *for* me, as it did *to* me, Hardwood, when I first looked at it. But, my dear good woman, this, surely, is not the most difficult part of the business. I have never talked to you about it, Hardwood; but it is quite impossible that you should be ignorant of——" And here the heiress came to a sudden stop.

"Of what, my dear Miss de Morley? Speak freely, my good young lady; and trust me, there is nothing that need lie upon your conscience—nothing, of which you need be ashamed."

“Ashamed, Hardwood? Good Heavens, no! Instead of being ashamed of it, I am more proud of it, than a poor, weak, sinful mortal ought to be of anything,” replied Juliana, with recovered energy. “But though not ashamed, I may, you know, be fearful that my dear mother may not see the thing in the same light that we do.”

“And in what light, Miss de Morley, can my lady see it, but as a proof that we value goodness and holiness, as they deserve to be valued?”

The pronoun *WE* rather grated upon the feelings of Juliana; but this was but for a moment; in the next, she smiled, and said, “Indeed, you are quite right, Hardwood. The making such a being as Mr. Stormont master here, is the very best proof that I can give, both to my mother and to all the world, that goodness and holiness are more precious, in my eyes, than all the wealth that ever man possessed.”

“And so they ought to be, my dear,” replied the housekeeper. “But yet I wish,” she added, slightly knitting her brows, “that when you tell her of it—and of course it is quite right that you should tell her—but when you

do, I wish you would not make use of the word MASTER. For that was exactly the word she used to use, when she spoke out, during my poor master's life-time, whenever she thought that Father Ambrose had too much influence. Often and often she has said to me, that he was *master* of the house."

Juliana smiled. It was a sweet, gentle, happy smile; and the good housekeeper was puzzled to guess what it was that could be passing in the young lady's head to produce it. But Juliana replied to her, by saying—

"Never mind the word, dear Hardwood; there is more than one, you know, that will make Mamma understand what we mean. But how do you think she will bear it, Hardwood?"

"Indeed, Miss de Morley," replied the old woman, gravely, "it would be wrong to use any word that could throw blame on Mr. Stormont. But the thing was my doing, altogether, Miss de Morley, and perhaps it would be better that I should tell my lady of it myself. I must speak plainly to her before long, you know, because it is quite impossible that we should go on as we are, and it may be as well to do it now as at any other time. It was I that did it, and it is I that ought to tell

of it; and if she turns me out of the house for it, I must submit."

"*You did it*, Hardwood? Did what? Somehow or other, we misunderstand each other very strangely," said Juliana. "What is it that you propose telling my mother, yourself?"

"Why, the letting Mr. Stormont in privately, by the secret door that opens from the chapel into the park. Dear, good gentleman! The Holy Virgin knows that it was only to let him perform—I mean, that it was only for him to perform his devotions."

"And is that all that you suppose I want to confess to my mother about Mr. Stormont, Hardwood?" demanded Juliana, very nearly laughing at the excess of the old woman's blind simplicity.

"Yes, indeed, ma'am, it was that I supposed you was thinking of," replied the housekeeper. "Is there anything else upon your mind, Miss de Morley?"

Juliana was a good deal vexed at perceiving that the business which she had thought completed, was still to begin; nay, she felt almost doubtful whether the good woman was not really ignorant of the attachment between Stormont and herself, which, though never yet

formally declared by him, she thought must have been almost as perceptible to the house-keeper, as to herself.

However, though a little disappointed at finding she still had to touch, for the first time openly, upon the delicate theme, she took courage, and kindly taking her old servant by the hand, she said, "Are you not aware, my dear Hardwood, that Mr. Stormont loves me? Are you not aware that it is my intention to marry him?"

"LOVE YOU! MARRY HIM!" screamed the poor woman, starting from her chair, and wringing her hands together, in as fearful agony as if she had seen the sun making a downward movement towards the earth. "Miss de Morley! Miss de Morley! are you mad?"

"I believe you are so, my good woman," replied Juliana, smiling on her rather scornfully.

"So, then, because Mr. Stormont lives in a moderate-sized house, instead of a castle, and happens to be, in all probability, a good deal less rich than I am, you think I must be mad, because I intend to marry him?"

The sedate composure with which Miss de Morley said this, produced a sedative effect

upon the agitated old woman. She began to reflect a little, and as she did so, she remembered the important fact, that she had been strictly commanded by Father Eustace, during his first secret interviews with her, never, under any circumstances, to disclose the fact of his being a priest. Father Eustace, from that first interview, had become both her director and confessor; and to those who have any acquaintance with Jesuit discipline, no more need be said to prove that the good woman instantly became as silent on this subject as the dark grave itself.

Yet, nevertheless, the horrible mistake into which this beloved child of her venerated master had fallen, produced a shock almost too violent to bear, with any semblance of outward composure, and no principle less stringent than that which enforced unceasing obedience upon the Order to which she belonged, could have enabled her to conquer it.

This principle, however, *did* conquer it; but it did not enforce the horrible necessity of letting this precious and last remnant of the De Morley race commit a sin of such vast magnitude, as the loving, and fancying she was beloved by, a vowed priest!

But the discovering a way to prevent it seemed, at the first moment, to require a power of intellect, and subtlety, beyond her reach, till, while yet struggling to find the means of stopping this tremendous sin, without disobeying the special commands of her director, a few simple words suggested themselves, which, on recalling the whole scene afterwards, she had the great comfort of feeling convinced, were dictated to her by inspiration.

“My dear Miss de Morley,” said she, “I think you have mistaken the feelings of Mr. Stormont towards you. I think I know all his feelings very well; and I do assure you that you are mistaken in thinking he is in love with you. Can you forgive me, my dear young lady, for being so plain-spoken with you?”

“Indeed, I can, dear Hardwood,” replied Juliana, without testifying, or indeed feeling, the very slightest mortification. “If such be your opinion, you would have been very wrong to have concealed it from me. I must bear it, my dear Hardwood, as well as I can; and about speaking to Mamma, you know, concerning all that has happened to me, we must consult again together about the manner of doing it.”

This was, as Juliana intended, received as a dismissal, and the still trembling Mrs. Hardwood left the library, while Juliana was left to console herself, under the disappointment of not having advanced an inch in her project of informing her mother of all that had passed, by going into the little chapel, and kneeling down upon the steps of the altar, exactly on the spot where she had received the fatal kiss, which was, at least, a panacea against her old friend's terrible assertion that Stormont *loved her not*.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS STANBERRY was not a young lady to permit any work in which she took an interest, to stand still, from want of energy on her part, in the carrying it forward. She therefore waited no longer than the following morning, before she informed her mother that she wished to make an early visit at Cuthbert Castle, and should order the horses accordingly.

“And may I go with you, my dear?” inquired her dutiful Mamma.

“Yes, if you please, ma’am,” was the indulgent reply. “I have something that I wish to say to Juliana, but that need not prevent your going. I shall take care that you are not in my way.”

And this “care” gave the young lady no great trouble. They found Lady Sarah and her daughter sitting together, but separately occupied in different parts of the room; but

the resolute agent of Sister Agatha, not contented with the opportunity for private conversation which this arrangement afforded, scrupled not to say, "Miss de Morley, I wish you would take me into your picture-gallery. I want to see some of the pictures again; and, besides, I want to talk to you."

Juliana immediately rose, and uttering some civil phrase expressive of her willingness to attend her, conducted her guest to what she called the picture-gallery, but which was, in fact, no other than the large saloon, from whence issued the secret passage by which Mrs. Hardwood had conducted Miss de Morley to the chapel.

Its walls, however, were so closely hung with paintings, as in some sort to justify the appellation which Adelaide had bestowed upon it, and for a few minutes after they had entered the room, she seemed occupied by them. But then, abruptly turning to her companion, she said—

"It really does contain some very striking pictures, and is altogether a most noble room, Miss de Morley. But at this moment, I have something to say to you a great deal more important than any of my criticisms upon the

pictures could be. Will you sit down with me upon this sofa for a few minutes?"

"Certainly," replied Juliana, and immediately seated herself.

"Though not naturally a very shy person," began the faithful agent of Mrs. Vavasor, "I feel considerable embarrassment in entering with you upon the subject on which I have come here to speak. Yet speak upon it I must, and will, however disagreeable the doing so may be to me. Neither you nor I, Miss de Morley, are of the class of young ladies who are apt to run up violent friendships, and no very great intimacy has hitherto existed between us. But, nevertheless, it is impossible to know you, even as I know you, without feeling very sincere admiration and esteem for you. Nothing can be more perfect, in its way, than the manner in which you conduct yourself towards everybody, never forgetting the dignity of your position in the neighbourhood, nor ever making the remembrance of it oppressive to others. I have marked all this a good deal more than you have probably given me credit for, and the result is, that I esteem you too highly not to inform you of a circumstance which it is very important you should

know, and of which you alone, of all the neighbourhood, I believe, are ignorant."

Juliana shook like an aspen leaf, from head to foot.

So completely were her heart and head filled by the image of Mr. Stormont, that the startling words of Miss Stanberry were immediately supposed by her to apply to him. The singular manner in which the love, which she could not doubt, still continued to be unavowed by Stormont, was, in fact, the constant theme of all her meditations; and it now suddenly occurred to her that some secret and fatal obstacle, perhaps a private and repented marriage, might be the cause of it, and that this fact, having become known to the neighbourhood, was now about to be announced to her by Miss Stanberry.

Adelaide was not slow in perceiving the agitation she had produced, and was a good deal puzzled to comprehend it. Had the scene occurred before her aunt's statement respecting Fanny had been confirmed by Mrs. Vavasor, she would have seen in this agitation a convincing proof that her own surmise was correct, and that it was the heiress of Cuthbert who was her rival. But the influence of the in-

triguing nun upon the mind of Adelaide, was such as almost to prevent the possibility of her doubting either her judgment, or her truth, and she had therefore to seek another cause for what she saw.

For a minute or two her thoughts were thus employed, and she remained silent; but it was in vain; she could make nothing of it, and therefore continued her communication.

"Perhaps," she said, "I am mistaken in supposing you ignorant of your mother's attachment? Perhaps you already know——"

"My mother's attachment, Miss Stanberry!" exclaimed Juliana, interrupting her. "What in the world can you mean? I know of no attachment, but her constant and devoted love to me."

"Poor girl!" returned Adelaide, mournfully. "It is painful to me to destroy so sweet a delusion; but I feel it is my duty to do it, because, if you know the facts, you may so use your influence as to prevent the painful reports which are getting into circulation from going farther; in short, you may convert the horrible scandal which now rests upon your mother's name, into the slight and unimportant censure that attaches to an imprudent marriage. Use

all your influence, Miss de Morley, to arrange a *speedy* marriage between Lady Sarah and Mr. Wardour, and all may yet be well."

The first ill-founded and overpowering suggestion of Juliana's mind being thus completely wiped away, her clear judgment and right feeling were at once restored to her; and it was not because she was any longer terrified, but because she very rationally wished to consult both, before she answered, that she now remained silent.

Adelaide very plainly perceived that she was meditating on the information she had received, and judiciously refrained from interrupting her.

At length Juliana said, every symptom of agitation having left her voice and manner, "Though we are neither of us very old, Miss Stanberry, I dare say that we have both been assured, by our teachers, that truth and falsehood are almost always blended together in every tale that rumour circulates. In that which you have now repeated, it is decidedly the case. That a strong feeling of attachment exists between my, in every way, admirable mother, and the excellent Rector of Cuthbert, I have no doubt; nay, I have the very strongest

conviction that it is so, but my conviction is equally strong, that this attachment is of a kind to do them both the highest honour. And as to the possibility that anything approaching to the nature of *slander* could, for a moment, attach itself to my mother's name, I no more believe it possible, than I do that your breath should rest upon the bright surface of that fine mirror yonder. Try the experiment, Miss Stanberry, and you will find that the vapour will pass away, and only leave its surface the brighter."

There was so much scorn, looking beautiful in the eye and lip of Miss de Morley, as she said this, that the audacious envoy was altogether discomfited; and the only attempt at a rejoinder that she felt power to make, consisted in these rather feeble words, "Well, Miss de Morley, I dare say that you know best." And feeling quite satisfied that she had done all she could, and thereby most honourably performed her part of the contract, she rose, and saying, rather haughtily, "I assure you that I have only done what I thought it was right to do," led the way out of the room.

Juliana quietly followed her, but as she did

so, she cast a glance towards the friendly cardinal who had made way for her so opportunely when her destiny called her to the never-to-be-forgotten scene in the chapel. The same gentle expression of features which had almost beguiled her, then, into the belief that her father lived again, and looked kindly at her, struck her now; and a thought shot through her mind, which, if her visitor, or her visitor's employers, had been aware of, it might have soothed them into the belief that their mission had not been in vain, though Juliana *had* "thrown away the worser half of it."

"Were it indeed true," thought she, "that my dear mother loves Mr. Wardour well enough to marry him, how much easier would it make my task of telling her that it is my purpose to marry Stormont!"

Had they been aware of this thought, they would have found in it the assurance that the influence of her mother's interference was sufficiently lessened to prevent its ever again becoming an effectual bar to their schemes.

The idea that Lady Sarah might become the wife of Wardour once received, no farther

danger remained that the fear of leaving her would prevent Juliana from becoming a nun, when her delusion respecting the nature of Mr. Stormont's attachment was dissolved.

As the thought above mentioned suggested itself, her eyes, which still rested on the picture, were almost again beguiled into the belief that it smiled upon her, and the visionary omen so cheered her, that she followed Miss Stanberry out of the room in a temper of mind greatly more composed, and happy, than when she had entered it.

On re-entering the drawing-room, the fair Adelaide speedily gave her mother to understand that she was ready and willing to depart; and accordingly they did depart, leaving Lady Sarah de Morley and her daughter *tête-à-tête*.

Now this was apparently an excellent opportunity for the confidential conversation to which the heiress looked as the termination of all the anxieties which now beset her. She no longer felt terrified at the idea of confessing that she was determined to bestow herself, and her broad lands, on Stormont; and even the painful avowal of her altered faith would

surely, she thought, cause greatly less annoyance to her mother, when it was joined to the tolerant assurance, that although she felt herself irresistibly drawn back to the ancient religion of her race, she should witness her ladyship's union with a professor of the new one, with the most heartfelt satisfaction, as this would be to her the most effectual guarantee against any possible domestic annoyance in future, from the difference of their opinions on the subject.

All this was clearly and well arranged in the mind of Juliana; and the preface to it was all but uttered, when she suddenly recollected, that however firmly she might be convinced of Mr. Stormont's attachment, she had no right thus formally to announce it to her mother, till it had been as decidedly announced to herself; and she stopped short at the very threshold of her important communication.

Lady Sarah was the last person in the world to (what is vulgarly called) "suspect anything;" had it been otherwise, it is probable that she would have noticed the heightened colour of her fair daughter's cheek, and perhaps might have inquired why it was that she sat down, and got up again, three succes-

sive times, and at last walked out of the room, observing that she thought there was still light enough left to permit her taking a short stroll on the western terrace.

CHAPTER VIII.

No very strict account has been kept of the progress of time since the arrival of Mr. Stormont at Langley Knoll. If we remember rightly, it must have been about the middle of September when he first took up his quarters there; and the mention of the Dowager Countess of Setterton's scheme for a pic-nic must not delude the reader into supposing that the seasons had actually stood still for her noble accommodation; but the fact was, that her ladyship always proposed a pic-nic, let the season be what it might, whenever a series of Cuthbert hospitalities compelled her, as she thought, to propose *something*; and many a pic-nic, as she called it, had been proposed, and accomplished too, at Christmas, by means of having a roaring fire lighted, at her ladyship's suggestion, at a farm-house, famous for roasted pippins and rich cream, to which the neigh-

bours, coaxed thereto by the aristocratic appellations of the mother and daughters, not unfrequently repaired: these meetings were always known by the sonorous title of "the Countess of Setterton's winter pic-nics." As the gentlemen of the party always paid for the pippins and cream, the fête was not a costly one to the proposer, and it was under some arrangement equally skilful, that one of the meetings, intended for the particular honour of Mr. Stormont and his guests, had been constructed. For that first pic-nic, which the indisposition of Lady Sarah prevented her daughter from joining, was by no means the only effort made by the Dowager Countess during the winter, for promoting, to the utmost extent of her power, the frequent social meetings to which the party at Langley Knoll made so very agreeable an addition. There was, in particular, something in the manner and conversation of Mr. Mills which was peculiarly agreeable to her. The Dowager Countess was as fond of being "treated with proper respect," as the well-remembered hero of one of our old farces; and never, perhaps, till she had the happiness of making acquaintance with this Jesuit gentleman, had she tasted that measure-

less contentment which a full flow of such respect was capable of affording her.*

In the course of the many long dinner and after-dinner talks to which this homage on the gentleman's part, and gracious acceptance of it on that of the lady, had led, a prodigious quantity of village gossip, and some very genuine village information, had been given and received. Nor was it of the idle, desultory sort, which might be considered as inconsistent with a mind of so high an order as that of Mr. Mills. He had the tact and the talent to lead this gossiping discourse to any subject he chose, and the greater tact and talent still, of making every subject amusing.

In this way he had not only created a very strong conviction in the mind of the Dowager Countess, that a second marriage, under *very* particular circumstances, might be contracted, even with an elderly commoner, without any mixture of disgrace attaching itself to the union; but had contrived, also, to extract from her every particle of information, respecting all the ladies and gentlemen of her Cuthbert acquaintance, which it was in any way convenient for him to receive.

The usefulness of this to the one great pro-

ject which occupied the trio at Langley Knoll, was perhaps greater than can be easily conceived by any one unacquainted with Jesuit tactics. It was like having a clock in the house, which gave shape, order, and usefulness to every hour of the day. There was no more danger of blundering, by doing one thing when they ought to be doing another; neither did either individual of the party run any risk of sporting opinions of a wrong colour, or of waxing warm, when their tactics rendered it advisable that they should wax cold.

In this manner there was scarcely a decided opinion, or a decided feeling, extant in any bosom (among the ladies and gentlemen) at Cuthbert, of which Mr. Mills and Mrs. Vavasor did not hold the string which could bring them into play; and though they did not consider it consistent with the high supremacy of the office which had been assigned them by Scaviatoli, to put their young brother completely in their confidence, he was made fully aware of the fact, that the admirable skill of Father Edgar had made him master of all the petty interests, and drawing-room intrigues, of the whole neighbourhood; and such had been the nature of Stormont's education,

that, despite all the naturally noble qualities of his heart, and the very superior powers of mind, which had been bestowed on him by the Giver of all good gifts, it never once occurred to him that this skilful mining into the secret concerns of his unsuspecting fellow creatures, was as basely contemptible, as it was ungratefully false.

No! It was undoubtedly *one* of the most effectual means, by which the human race are brought under subjection to the divinely-organized institution of the Holy Company of Jesus; and Father Eustace would as soon have thought of blaming a mother, or a nurse, for watching carefully over the sports and pastimes of a parcel of babies, as of finding anything reprehensible, or, rather, anything that was not admirable, and deserving a degree of reverence very little short of adoration, in the ceaseless labour bestowed upon finding out all that was done, said, or thought, by the unsuspecting human beings around them.

The sort of intimacy which had arisen between Mr. Mills and the father of William Curtis has been already described; and when it became known to the accomplished Jesuit, that the marriage between young Curtis and

Fanny Clarence, which, in conjunction with Mrs. Vavasor, he had undertaken to prevent, had already received the consent of the young man's parents, he mounted the pleasant-going little horse which his affectionate nephew kept stabled for his accommodation, and rode over to pay a morning visit at the squire's.

It was by this time an established rule at the mansion of Mr. Curtis, to usher the particularly agreeable new neighbour, Mr. Mills, into the library, whenever he asked for the master of the house. He did so on the present occasion, and was shown, accordingly, into the second-best library in the county, that at Cuthbert Castle being the first.

But Mr. Curtis was not there, and while the servant sought for him, the learned visitor occupied himself by taking a keen, though cursory, survey of the contents of the shelves.

Was it scorn that curled his lip at the nature of the wares he found there? No! It was hatred, loathing, and abhorrence. Instead of the heavy tomes of mystical erudition, saintly legend, party theology, and Jesuit logic, with which the souls, and the cells of the learned ought to be lined, Father Edgar, as he looked around, beheld the records of all

the various products of the unshackled mind of man.

Could there be a spectacle more repugnant to the spirit of a Jesuit? He felt as if he were standing, plunged to the chin, in a cauldron of steaming heresy.

Did he cross himself? No!

Professional religionists of his class never do so, when they are alone.

But he ground his teeth, and he clenched his fists, (for by nature William Mills, Esq., was rather a choleric man,) and in curses quite the reverse of loud, but very remarkably deep, he doomed all who had dared to write, and, with a few particular exceptions, all who had dared to read these accursed fruits of the freedom of human intellect, to everlasting torments.

Could the beautiful Adelaide herself have chosen the circumstances under which the stipulated reward for her services should be paid, she could not have selected them better. It was by no means impossible that the dignified Father Edgar, whose ordinary occupations had much more to do with the uprooting national institutions, than the plotting to ensure the success of a love affair—it was not

even improbable that he might have executed the business he came upon, exactly with so much zeal, and no more, as might secure the conspiracy from the danger of being betrayed by some burst of indignant disappointment from Miss Stanberry, before the result of it was obtained.

But now he felt as if the cause were his own; and that all the mischief and misery he could contrive to inflict on any one bearing the name of Curtis, or on any other one, loving, or beloved by them, was so much incense offered on the altar of Jesuitism.

Mr. Curtis had wandered to a distant pasture in order to look at a particularly precious flock of sheep, but hastened back to the house the moment he heard that Mr. Mills was in his library. Nothing could be more cordial than the manner in which the two gentlemen greeted each other; but, the first salutations over, it was impossible for Mr. Curtis not to perceive that his new friend had something upon his mind that pained him.

The intimacy between them was scarcely of sufficient standing to justify Mr. Curtis in asking what this might be, and yet the oppression upon the spirits of his accomplished

visitor was too obvious to render the continuation of ordinary conversation possible.

At length, however, this sort of doubting embarrassment was brought to an end, by Mr. Mills saying, rather abruptly, but with an air of friendly frankness which it was impossible to resist, "My dear Mr. Curtis! am I deceived in the judgment I have formed of you? May I not hope that I may venture to speak to you with the freedom of a friend, without giving you offence?"

"Indeed, my good sir, you may," replied Curtis, very cordially. "Believe me, I shall feel such a manner of speaking from you, as a favour rather than an offence."

"And yet the matter, my dear sir, is a very delicate one," rejoined Mr. Mills, shaking his head, and looking, as it seemed, rather timidly in the face of his new acquaintance; "but it is something that concerns you nearly; and though there are many men whom I have known familiarly, for more years than I have known you months, Mr. Curtis, I doubt if there be one of them towards whom I should venture to act as I am now about to act towards you."

There was here a moment's pause, Mr. Curtis not knowing exactly what he ought to say; but at length he replied—

“I will not urge you to place any confidence in me, about which you are doubtful, Mr. Mills; but if you decide upon speaking what seems to be upon your mind, I do not believe that I should give you any reason to repent of it.”

“I am quite sure of it,” returned Mr. Mills, eagerly; “do not suppose that I doubt it for a moment. But the nature of my communication will explain to you why I feel embarrassed in making it. I am told, Mr. Curtis, that there is a widow lady in your neighbourhood, called Clarence—Mrs. Clarence, the widow of Captain Clarence, formerly stationed with his regiment in the West Indies. Is this true?”

“Yes, certainly, it is true, Mr. Mills,” replied Mr. Curtis. “The lady you mention is the sister of the Honourable Mrs. Stanberry, who has one of the prettiest places in our pretty neighbourhood, at a very short distance from Cuthbert Castle.”

“Exactly so,” rejoined the visitor. “And

is it true, likewise, that this widow lady has with her an only daughter, a very pretty young creature, called Fanny?"

"And this, likewise, is perfectly true," returned the unsuspecting Mr. Curtis, with a smile.

This smile, however, was speedily exchanged for an aspect of great anxiety, when Mr. Mills, after a very ominous pause, rejoined, with a deep sigh, "It is, then, as I feared! I see no possible hope of mistake!"

"Hope of mistake!" repeated Mr. Curtis. "Why should you hope for a mistake, sir?"

"Because, my noble-hearted, unsuspecting friend!" replied the Jesuit, with the air of a man who would have tears in his eyes, did he not struggle hard to prevent it—"because I would fain believe that you had not given your consent to your son's marrying a girl who, young as she is, has already been made a dishonoured mother!"

"Gracious Heaven, sir! What are you talking about?" replied Mr. Curtis, starting from his chair. "Mistake? Depend upon it, Mr. Mills, you need not lament the want of a mistake. Depend upon it, you have permitted yourself to

be most grossly and most vilely imposed upon. Could you see the sweet girl of whom you have repeated this atrocious slander, be very sure that you would be yourself the first to disbelieve it."

"Alas! alas!" cried Mr. Mills, pathetically wringing his hands together, "I HAVE seen her, and it is therefore that I am sure there can be no mistake."

"Seen her?" repeated Mr. Curtis, the expression of his countenance suddenly changing—"seen her?" he reiterated, as he gloomily resumed his seat. "Where did you see her, Mr. Mills? Where? and when?"

"I have seen her often, very often," replied the Jesuit, mildly, and gently shaking his head, as if deprecating the uncivil, not to say ungrateful, violence of his companion. "I have seen her very often during the lifetime of her father, and since his death. This answers your question as to *when*; and the where, my poor friend, is as easily told—it was at the colonial residence of her guiltily negligent father."

"But, in the name of Heaven! sir, what age do you suppose this girl to be?"

"I believe her to have passed her seven-

teenth birth-day some months ago. You cannot be ignorant, I imagine, of the different estimate put upon the age of females in our climate and in that of the tropics. The lamentable event I speak of occurred to the unfortunate Fanny Clarence before she had completed her sixteenth year."

Poor Mr. Curtis looked, and felt, inexpressibly shocked; and fain, oh, very fain, poor gentleman, would he have believed that the mistake, which his companion had wished for, had indeed been possible; but it evidently was not. For a moment or two they both remained silent, both looking exceedingly miserable, and one feeling so.

At length Mr. Curtis said, "The singular manner in which this wretched girl has been kept out of sight is now sufficiently explained. She, or her mother for her, contrived to get acquainted with my unfortunate son; but, till his unhappy attachment was made known to us, we could hardly be said to have known of her existence, though we are now quite aware that she has been here for a long time, I scarcely know how long, but probably ever since the death of her father. Has the unhappy creature seen you, Mr. Mills, since you have been

in the neighbourhood? How dreadful must her feelings have been if she is aware that you were acquainted with her conduct!"

"Of that she is perfectly aware, and I should wish, very sincerely wish to spare both herself and her mother the agony of such a meeting. There is no danger, however, as I understand, of my meeting the mother, as she is too infirm to leave her room; and the girl herself has hitherto kept out of sight so effectually, that I have never seen her since I have been in the neighbourhood. Now, however, that I have learnt with certainty that she is here, I shall myself, of course, take especial care to avoid her. I declare to you, my dear Mr. Curtis, that the idea of witnessing her agony upon seeing me, will be quite sufficient to make me refuse every invitation which might give me the very slightest chance of meeting her."

"The feeling does honour to your humanity," replied Mr. Curtis; "but there need be no danger," he added, indignantly, "that the neighbourhood should be deprived of the great pleasure and advantage of your society, Mr. Mills. I should be sorry to be harsh to any woman, and especially to one in the very pitiable situation of Mrs. Clarence. But it cannot

be supposed that the information you have so kindly given me, can be kept secret from my son and——”

“From your son, certainly not, Mr. Curtis,” replied the Jesuit, interrupting him; “but, of course, I consider you as bound in honour to mention *my name* to no one, not even to him.”

“But how am I to avail myself of the great and important service you have done me, Mr. Mills, if I am to keep him in ignorance of it?” demanded Mr. Curtis.

“Most assuredly I do not wish you to keep him ignorant of the *facts* which I have communicated to you. Heaven forbid that I should permit *any* motive to interfere with the honour and happiness of your son, by letting him remain under his present most dangerous delusion! All I request is, that *my name* may be kept secret.”

“I greatly fear, that unless I give authority for this frightful tale, as unimpeachable as that upon which I have myself received it, my unhappy son will give no credence to it,” said Mr. Curtis, anxiously looking in the face of his new friend, to watch the effect which this reasonable remonstrance might make upon him. But he looked in vain. Nobody at that

moment could have read anything on the countenance of Mr. Mills, beyond a sort of frank, gentle, confiding goodness, which seemed trusting to the good faith and secresy of his companion, with a reliance too perfect to admit any feeling of anxiety on the subject.

"I am quite sure that you do not seriously think of betraying me," said he, with a smile of the most touching confidence. "I should not believe your own word, my good friend, were you to pledge it to me that you would betray me."

"Betray you! God forbid that I should betray any man!" replied the truly honourable gentleman, greatly shocked, and perhaps a little disgusted, at hearing such a phrase used, even hypothetically, in conjunction with his name.

"But if I may not name the authority upon which I have received this most dreadful and heart-breaking intelligence, how can I expect that my son should consent to break off the engagement he has formed?"

"I should hope, Mr. Curtis," replied the Jesuit, "that the reliance which your son *ought* to, and must have upon the word of such a father, will suffice to make him feel certain

that if *you* tell him the thing is so, no doubt can by possibility attach to the statement."

The forehead of Mr. Mills was contracted by a rather remarkable knitting of the brows, as he said this. It was a look that seemed not intended for the father, but for the son, and said, as plainly as a look could say, "DO YOU DARE!"

It has been broadly stated, more than once, I believe, that Mr. Curtis was a surly man, and his ordinary manner, upon ordinary occasions, certainly gave that impression. But no one would ever have thought of accusing him, even in his surliest moments, of being tyrannical. There was no such propensity in his nature, but, on the contrary, a very decided aversion to any and everything that approached to it in others.

The knitting of the Jesuit's brows certainly did not endure for half a minute, but its effect on the mind of Mr. Curtis was more lasting. Whether he could be considered as fully justified in permitting this cursory expression of a gentleman's eyebrows so to rest upon his mind, as positively to undermine and destroy the very decided predilection which he had before conceived for him, is another question.

But Mr. Curtis was an odd man, and odd men will act and feel oddly. However, he was a clever man, too, and did not, either now or ever, so wear his heart upon his sleeve, as to have it pecked at, and publicly examined. "You may depend upon it, Mr. Mills," said he, "that the promise of secrecy which I have given you shall be kept; and if it be your opinion that this secrecy should be extended to my son, I shall certainly not oppose it, inasmuch as you have clearly the right to exclude him from your confidence, if it be your wish to do so. As to the saving him from uniting himself with so lost a creature as you have described, I must have recourse to absolute authority, if it be necessary."

"Of course you must, my dear sir," replied the perfectly well-satisfied Jesuit. "So only can a father *properly* perform his duty to a son."

Having reached this point, which seemed equally satisfactory to both parties, the conversation speedily came to a conclusion. Mr. Mills rose to depart, affectionately pressing the hand of the acknowledged Huguenot between his own. But the acknowledged Huguenot, though he yielded to the pressure, did not re-

turn it; although it was no acknowledged Jesuit that stood before him. Real sympathy between human beings (and this mysterious link exists as surely as the equally mysterious one of contagion) may be safely left to itself; it can walk alone without any danger of stumbling, and sometimes really seems able to find its way blindfold.

But it is not so with the counterfeit article; it requires a vast deal of watchfulness and care to make it pass current at all.

Mr. Mills had hitherto bestowed all this watchfulness and care upon his look, voice, and manner, when in communion with Mr. Curtis; and we have seen that his skill and pains were not thrown away. But he now perhaps felt that his work was done in that quarter; and though he by no means intended to undo it, there was something, either present, or absent, in his manner of taking his leave, which (joined to the foregone knitting of the brows) both chilled and puzzled Mr. Curtis.

He felt that he did not like him so well as he used to do, but could not tell why. Had he known that his new acquaintance was a Jesuit monk, he would have understood the whole affair perfectly.

CHAPTER IX.

THE state of mind of the worthy Mrs. Hardwood, after receiving her young mistress's confidence on the subject of Father Eustace, was really pitiable. A more truly worthy woman than the Roman-catholic housekeeper of Cuthbert Castle never lived. Her attachment to Juliana was not only most completely disinterested—for the old housekeeper possessed an income amply sufficient for all her wants—but it partook strongly of that most sublime species of affection, which has more of constancy in it than any merely mortal attachment can have, for it flings its loving watchfulness forward to an existence that shall have no end.

The moment of her life which she considered to be, beyond all comparison, the happiest she had ever known, was that in which she had

first seen the Huguenot heiress of Cuthbert kneel as a convert to the Roman church, before the altar of her father.

How joyously did she light tapers, from her own honest treasury of atoning and thanksgiving wax, and place them before the Cuthbert image of the Virgin, on that blessed night. How fervently did she mutter over all her litanies before she closed her eyes in sleep! And how punctually did she again enter the little chapel at the "sweet hour of prime," to breathe anew her thankfulness, while kneeling on the self-same spot on which she had seen the young and dearly-loved representative of all the De Morleys kneel before!

In exact proportion to all this heartfelt joy, was the depth of her sorrow—let me rather say her despair—now that she had lived to hear that same thrice precious offspring of De Morley utter a blasphemy, which, to the best of poor Mrs. Hardwood's knowledge and belief, was as bad and as soul-destroying as the most deeply-Protestant prayer that ever was prayed could possibly have been.

In simple truth, the agony of her spirit, when she had left Juliana, and retired to her own room, was dreadful. She scarcely dared to

pray. The subject was too sacrilegious, too profane for her to permit her thoughts to embody it in words. Gracious Heaven!—love a vowed priest, and talk of marriage with him!

It was not till she had wept for a long bitter hour in solitude and contrite suffering, that she recovered sufficient command of her intellect to feel that it was her bounden duty to communicate the dreadful intelligence to Father Eustace.

It is impossible to describe the sort of holy horror which the poor woman felt at the thought of making such a communication to the consecrated young man. She felt this the more acutely, because she was aware that she should have to do it first, and confess the having done it afterwards. She scarcely knew which would be the most terrible!

Since the arrival of Father Edgar at Langley Knoll, he had twice condescended to pronounce absolution on the sins of the house-keeper, in consideration of the high esteem which Father Ambrose had expressed for her, and of the particular request which had been forwarded to him from Rome, when his visit to Cuthbert had been made known there, that he *would* condescend to perform this office to

one who had proved herself so faithful a servant, not only to her master but to the church.

This high favour had accordingly been granted; and proud indeed, but of course with the properly humble ecclesiastical sort of pride, was the good housekeeper of this honour, (for the real station of Father Edgar was a high one.) But let any one imagine what the good woman must have felt, at the idea of confessing to this distinguished individual, that she had communicated to a young priest the horrible fact, that he was suspected by her young mistress of being in love with her! and, moreover—(surely it must be a deadly sin to speak it!)—moreover, that her young mistress had explicitly declared it was her intention to marry him!

Yet all this, horrible as it was, must be done; for the sin of concealing the dreadful secret thus confided to her would be of a nature almost beyond the reach of penance to atone.

Should she wait for the next visit of Father Eustace, in order to announce to him the appalling news, which she knew it would be so terrible for him to hear? Alas, she now re-

membered, what it had never occurred to her to remark till now, that Miss de Morley, having found the library the best room, in point of light, for finishing some of her more elaborate drawings, was seldom absent from it when Mr. Stormont availed himself of the permission which had been granted him to enter the chapel by the private door from the park.

It is true that *she* also was permitted to enter both chapel and library freely, whether her young mistress were in either or not. But this permission could not avail her now. It must be in perfect and most assured security from all interruption that this terrifying disclosure must be made; and in order to secure this, the poor old woman determined to walk over to Langley Knoll early on the following morning, which would enable her to perform her dreaded duty without interruption.

Sick at heart, and literally trembling in every limb, but not so much from bodily as from mental weakness, the well-intentioned informer made her way across the park, and found herself at Mr. Stormont's door just as the earliest of the household was on foot to open it for her.

At any other mansion, such a visit, at such

an hour, would probably have created both surprise and curiosity, but at the residence of Mr. Stormont it produced neither. The servants, though they had been personally strangers to him when he arrived, were nevertheless very well-trying servants; well tried by the process to which all those are subjected who are admitted as domestic attendants upon gentlemen and ladies in any way connected with the holy Company of Jesus. That is to say, that what they saw with their eyes had nothing whatever to do with their understanding, and what they heard with their ears had no manner of connexion with their powers of comprehension in any way.

So when the aged, but very respectable-looking Mrs. Hardwood appeared before the door, and desired leave to see the master of the house, the circumstance of her being unknown did not even elicit an inquiry as to her name, but she was soberly ushered into a small room in which there were two chairs and a table, and there left, without being required to give any account whatever, either of herself or her errand.

Glad enough was Mrs. Hardwood to find that there was a chair to sit upon. She hardly

knew how she got there, but felt as if her strength would not have sufficed to have carried her many steps further.

She might have been as well, or better pleased, perhaps, had she been kept a little longer waiting; for she fancied that a few more minutes of rest might have given her more power to speak; but as it was, Mr. Stormont came to her so quickly, that when she endeavoured to stand up in order to receive him, her strength altogether failed her, and she sat down and burst into tears.

The first idea of Father Eustace was, that Juliana was ill, perhaps dying; and that her old and faithful servant had secretly been sent by her to summon him to receive her first and last confession. This idea robbed him of all self-command, and with a face as pale as ashes, he said, "Miss de Morley is dying!"

"No, sir, no!" replied the old woman, regaining some portion of strength, as it seemed, from feeling that there still was within the verge of possibility something that was perhaps still more terrible than even the dreadful news which she came to communicate.

"No, sir, no!" she repeated. "Miss de Morley is not dying, and may the blessed

saints and angels so watch over and protect her, that she may live to make me again bless the day that she was born!"

"What brings you here, my good Mrs. Hardwood?" rejoined Father Eustace, in a voice of forced composure, and with a sort of frigid formality, that was intended to counteract the effect of the emotion which he was partly conscious of having betrayed.

"I know it is a liberty, sir, which I have no right to take without your orders; but it is no common thing that has brought me here, and now that I am come, I doubt if I shall have strength and courage to do my errand."

"Then you *have* something terrible to tell me?" returned Father Eustace, again showing very evident symptoms of agitation. "Tell me, at once, what it is. Tell me, at once, I command you!"

"And you shall be obeyed, sir!" replied the trembling old woman. "I will obey your commands, Father Eustace, though I should fall dead at your feet as I do so!"

But having said this, she stopped, and gasped for breath.

The lips of Father Eustace moved again, as if to hasten the obedience she promised; but

no sound passed them, and they were as bloodless as his cheeks.

Perhaps at that moment he guessed, in some sort, what the nature of the communication might be.

“Holy father!” began the terrified housekeeper, “I have news to tell, that to your wisdom and saint-like holiness may seem light, compared to what it has been to me. For you will know how to cure and absolve from her sin, the dear unhappy child of my blessed master. Oh! Father Eustace! have pity on her, and let not her penance be too hard to bear! Alas! she has been bred in sin, as well as born in it, and let that plead for her!”

“Speak, woman!—speak!” ejaculated the young Jesuit, with more vehemence than became his calling. “This lingering keeps me on the rack!”

“The saints forbid!” cried the poor woman, clasping her hands in great agony. “If I have done this already, what will my next words do!”

More and more convinced that the old woman had made some discovery of a nature as far as possible from being a consolation to any of the various torments that were gnawing

at his heart, the unfortunate young man made no farther effort to hasten her disclosure, but folding his arms upon his breast, and fixing his eyes upon the ground, he awaited, in rigid silence, the blow he expected to receive.

Mrs. Hardwood would greatly have preferred his speaking again. She would have given much if he would only have asked her one more question. Anything in the world, she thought, that he could have said, would have assisted her. But now she must begin again. How? In what words could she state the fearful secret she had to disclose?

At this terrible moment a thought struck her, which she hailed as a direct inspiration from Heaven. Mrs. Hardwood, as well as every one else in the county, knew that Mr. Stormont had a lady, who was a near relation, staying with him.

As the very Roman-catholic old housekeeper knew almost as well as Father Scaviatoli himself, what was the object for which Langley Knoll had been tenanted, (as far, at least, as it concerned the conversion of the heiress, for of the project for her becoming a nun, she knew nothing,) she failed not to give this lady-relative credit for having a share in the holy scheme

that was to restore the possessor of Cuthbert Castle to the church; and if this were so, how much better and more fitting would it be, that she should disclose the dreadful mistake of the young heiress to her than to Father Eustace himself.

No sooner had this bright idea struck her, than she recovered her usual quiet, respectful manner, and said, "I hope your reverence will have the kind condescension to excuse me, for having alarmed you in the manner I have done. But your reverence will please to remember, that it is a very new and anxious time for me, stepping, as I may say, between my lady and her daughter, and not daring to do anything out of my own head towards the making them understand each other better than they do at present. I hope, holy father, that this awkward situation will get me your pardon, for my not knowing rightly what it would be best for me to do or say. But just now it has come into my head, sir, that the very best thing I could do, would be to have a little conversation about Miss de Morley with the honourable lady, your near relative, sir, who I know is staying in your house."

The first movement of Father Eustace, on hearing this proposal for betraying all the secrets of the unhappy Juliana to Mrs. Vavasor, was to forbid, most positively, that any such disclosure should be made. But ere he had said more than "Mrs. Hardwood, I ——" an idea flashed upon his mind as suddenly as on that of the housekeeper, and, like her, he almost hailed it as an inspiration.

The first misery that had fallen upon him in the execution of the important mission upon which he had been sent from Rome, arose from his being conscious, that while devoutly labouring to save the soul of the last De Morley, by bringing her back to the faith of her ancestors, he was endangering, if not the safety of his own (for that happily was secured by its Jesuit patent beyond all reach of human casualties), at least the earthly blessing of his peace of mind, by falling most desperately in love with her.

His misery, his conscientious misery, on first making this discovery was very great indeed, but, strange to say, as his malady increased, his sufferings from it lessened. He began to remember, that the more he suffered on earth, the greater would his reward be in

heaven, and that far from shrinking from a misfortune, and even a sin, that had fallen upon him in the performance of his duty, he ought to bend and break his suffering, struggling spirit, till he had fairly endured the species of martyrdom which Providence and Scaviatoli had allotted him.

But very soon after he had schooled his rebellious spirit into what he flattered himself was a state of very holy resignation, he discovered, with a degree of agony which was perfectly genuine, notwithstanding the sort of spasmodic rapture which accompanied it, that his innocent and unsuspecting convert had given him her heart in return for her conversion. There are many scoffers at the Jesuit practice, and the Romish faith, who may feel inclined to smile at this statement of the young monk's sufferings.

But they know not what they laugh at.

Such a predicament as that of Father Eustace *has* existed. And it was no laughing matter.

Then, too, came upon him, and at close quarters, the long-braved terror of being obliged, both in conformity to a solemn promise given, and a still more solemn obedience

vowed, to Scaviatoli, to call to his assistance and support the highest Jesuitical authority, as well as the soundest Jesuitical judgment, with which the still rebellious islands of Great Britain had, as yet, been honoured.

No person, not having the power or will to comprehend the faithful devotedness of Edward Stormont to his religion, and, if possible, his still greater devotedness to the Society to which he belonged, can conceive an idea of the mental anguish which accompanied the conviction, that in order to keep his promise, and fulfil his vow, to the full extent his tender conscience demanded, he must confess himself incapable of going through, single-handed, with the business he had undertaken; and that, in order to do his duty, he must call in a superior, to whose eyes he must display all the most sacred secrets of his own tortured heart, and those, ten million times more sacred still, of the innocent, generous, unsuspecting girl WHO LOVED HIM!

Ben se' crudel, se tu già non ti duoli
Pensando cio ch' al suo cuor s'annanziava
E se non piongì, di che pianger suoli?

Those who do not, and, perhaps, cannot believe such a state of things to be possible, are

in no condition to judge, either of the merit, or the misery, of my unhappy hero; but those more capable of comprehending what human nature is, under all circumstances, and better informed as to the actual existence of such as have been stated above, can scarcely fail to allow, that Edward Stormont was one of that highest order of heroes, who have been schooled into the power of subduing *self*.

The fallacy of the principles upon which his notions of right and wrong were founded, has nothing to do with the question of his high-toned virtue in conforming to them.

No obloquy, no, not even a shadow of contempt, can lie at his door. That his state of mind offered a moral spectacle that it is deplorable, terrible, horrible to see, is true, most true. But the pity only belongs to him; the terror, and the horror, to the stupendous system which has enabled, and does still enable, men to fly in the face of all-bounteous Nature, and so deform her noblest work, as to leave it the reverse of all she intended that it should be.

It is equally wicked and ignorant to suppose that all Jesuits are vicious. But the

subjection of human hearts to a human rather than a divine law, is and must be evil.

To the calling for help, when he feared his own strength might fail him, he had already submitted; and it had brought with it all the galling mortification he had expected.

It is true, however, that when confessing the weakness which might lead him into the peril of being more tender than steadfast in his management of his beautiful convert, he had by no means been harshly treated. On the contrary, indeed, he was well-nigh disgusted, or would have been so, had his judgment been less shackled, by the lightness with which his confession was received; for when he had, with deep humility, declared that he doubted his own power of enduring resolutely the sufferings that this weakness had produced, the reply of Father Edgar was in these words:—

“ I dare say, my good fellow, that it is all exceedingly disagreeable. You are still quite a young man, and as long as that lasts, this sort of feeling always appears a matter of immense importance; yet, after all, Brother Eustace, it is not surely possible, is it, that you can so completely have lost your head, as not to per-

ceive that your feelings, let them be what they will, cannot, for the thousandth part of an instant, be brought into competition with the interests of the Company of Jesus? Pooh! pooh! Never mind your love, Brother Eustace. I dare say it will not beguile you into any very outrageous proceedings; but even if it should, I will undertake to say, that you shall be treated with great lenity, provided you so manage as to make your pretty convert think, at last, that the best thing she can do will be to go into a nunnery."

To this the only answer of Father Eustace had been given, by meekly bowing his head, and folding his open hands upon his breast, somewhat in the form of a cross.

And this was all which had, as yet, passed between him and his superior on the subject of the dangers which might ensue, if the task of obtaining the greatest possible influence over the mind of Miss de Morley were still intrusted to him.

He had never, as yet, communicated his thoughts respecting the effect which his now daily intercourse with his convert might possibly produce on her. But at the foot of his own little altar, and at the foot of hers, he had

vowed to offer up this secret also; but as yet a strangely mixed sensation of hope and fear, had led him to believe that it was still his duty to wait a little longer, lest, perchance, his own feelings might have beguiled him, and so, that from his very anxiety to deliver up the whole of his dearest secrets to those whom he believed had especial permission from Heaven to demand them, he might be led to deceive instead of enlighten them.

Most certainly these hoping, fearing doubts grew fainter and fainter, till the battle within him, between his fear of being presumptuous on the one hand, or forsworn and disobedient on the other, was very nearly over; and he took at last the desperate resolution of informing Father Edgar, that Juliana de Morley had fallen into a horrible and most lamentable error as to the motive which had led him to pass so many hours in her society.

This torturing resolution he had resolved to act upon, during the meditations of the night preceding the day that opened upon him by Mrs. Hardwood's early visit.

Scarcely had she begun to speak to him, scarcely, indeed, had he looked in her face, and read there the unusual agitation which worked

in every feature, than he suspected the nature of her visit, and so dreaded to hear from her lips the dreadful disclosure that was so soon to pass his own, that her sudden change of purpose, together with her declaration, that the communication she wished to make had better be confided to Mrs. Vavator, was for the moment a very great relief to him.

“Be it so—be it so!” he replied, with earnestness, but with as much composure of manner as it was in his power to assume. “It is impossible, Mrs. Hardwood, that you could find a fitter person to communicate with than Mrs. Vavator. You will wish, I presume, that your conversation with her should be without any witness?”

“Yes, holy father!” replied Mrs. Hardwood, in a tone which left no doubt as to her being in earnest on that point; “it will suit better that we should be alone.” The young priest waited to hear no more, but left the good woman, with a hospitable request that she would refresh herself after her walk, by taking breakfast, while she allowed Mrs. Vavator time to do the same, and promised that she should be summoned to that lady’s pre-

sence as soon as she should be ready to receive her.

Very comfortable materials for the morning meal were speedily placed before the almost exhausted housekeeper, and she proved her claim to the reputation which she had ever enjoyed, of being a very sensible woman, by the effort she made to eat her breakfast and compose her spirits.

It was a good while, however, before she was admitted to the holy lady whom she had desired to see; for Sister Agatha was particularly partial to the refectory called breakfast, probably because it gave an opportunity for the introduction of various of those sugary preparations which holy ladies are said to prepare so admirably, and consume so largely.

Be this as it may, it was past ten o'clock before a man-servant entered the little room occupied by the housekeeper of Cuthbert Castle, and announced to her that Mrs. Vavasor desired to see her.

Poor dear Mrs. Hardwood! Her knees knocked together as she entered the presence of the lady whom in her heart she had very little doubt, indeed, must, in some way or

other, be very nearly connected either with the Pope, or with some cardinal, perhaps as grand and great a man as their own cardinal had been ; or, in short, with some person or persons of great consequence, connected with the holy Roman-catholic church, who was come there to make acquaintance with Miss de Morley, in consequence of the blessed news sent to Rome by Father Eustace, of that young lady's conversion to the true faith.

Her knees knocked together ; but, nevertheless, she entered the room with an aspect and manner of great propriety, and made the lady a curtsy as respectful as if she had been already an acknowledged abbess.

Father Eustace was in the room, but as soon as he had presented Mrs. Hardwood to his *aunt*, as the worthy housekeeper of Cuthbert Castle, who particularly wished to speak to her, he left it, and Mrs. Vavasor and her visitor were left alone.

“ I am glad to see you, Mrs. Hardwood,” said the holy lady, bending her head with benignant condescension, “ for my nephew speaks highly of you as a very godly woman, who has done much towards restoring a lost sheep to the fold. What is it you wish to say

to me? Is it anything concerning Miss de Morley?"

"Yes, gracious lady!" replied the house-keeper. "It is, indeed; and I trust to your gracious forgiveness, for making you hear what no such lady as you can hear without great grief and woe. I doubt not, madam, that you are already advised of the blessed change that has been wrought by that holy man Father Eustace, on the mind of my young lady, and that she has changed the false faith for the true, in consequence?"

"Oh yes, my good woman, I know all that already," replied Mrs. Vavasor. "And, perhaps, you are come to tell me, that your young lady, who seems to be under the especial favour of Heaven, has shown symptoms of a religious vocation? Perhaps, Mrs. Hardwood, you have reason to think Miss de Morley likely to become a holy nun?"

The cheeks of Mrs. Hardwood became crimson, as she listened to these words, and although a vocation which would have put a stop to the De Morley line, would have been the last thing, next to the horrible misfortune which had actually occurred, that the faithful old servant would have desired, yet the terrible contrast

between the holiness of her supposed errand, and the sacrilegious nature of her real one, almost overpowered her.

For the honour of the profession in general, I am sorry to say, that it was with the utmost difficulty Sister Agatha preserved the gravity of her demeanour, as she watched the countenance of Mrs. Hardwood. Quick in observing, and acute in comprehending every outward expression of feeling in those with whom she conversed, Sister Agatha immediately suspected the nature of the communication which the old woman was about to make to her; her perspicuity being doubtless a little sharpened by what Father Edgar, when discussing the present state of affairs with her, had jocularly called the Jeremiade of Father Eustace about his tender passion.

She speedily subdued, however, every outward demonstration of such ill-timed mirth, and by her gentle and insinuating manner, soon led the good woman into the midst of her delicate subject; and before many minutes had elapsed, became acquainted with every circumstance that it was in the power of the housekeeper to communicate.

Sister Agatha shook her head, and looked

solemn. But after meditating for some time, as it seemed, upon the subject, she said—

“Be not overmuch distressed, my good woman, at this misfortune. Who knows but that this very thing which now disturbs you so cruelly, may have been settled by the saints and angels in heaven, with the Virgin Mary in the midst of them, expressly on purpose to bring about some great and holy purpose, which it is not vouchsafed us, as yet, to understand.”

Mrs. Hardwood crossed herself at this mention of the saints, angels, and Blessed Virgin; but there was something in her look which made Sister Agatha suspect that the old woman did not feel disposed to believe that they knew anything about the matter, or that, at any rate, she greatly doubted their approval of it.

The holy lady, who had already conceived her own notions as to what it would be proper to do under the circumstances, at once conquered this impious sort of free-thinking, by adding, “I believe you know, Mrs. Hardwood, who the gentleman is, who has been introduced to this neighbourhood as Mr. Mills?”

On hearing these words, the housekeeper

immediately rose from her seat and made a low curtsy, having done which, she answered, "Yes, madam, I do."

"Then I presume you will be satisfied by his opinion on this subject. The present question of course is, whether Father Eustace should be made acquainted with what you now tell me, or whether he should not? I myself, my good Mrs. Hardwood, am not altogether without some right, and authority, to give an opinion on the matter; but as you know Mr. Mills better at this moment than you know me, I shall waive my right, and say nothing till I have consulted him. Sit here, if you please, while I go to him. I shall state the case exactly as you have stated it to me, and when he has given me his opinion on the subject, I will bring it to you."

More than ever convinced that Mrs. Vavasor was a very great and holy lady, and very probably an abbess in disguise, Mrs. Hardwood listened to her with an immensity of reverence, mixed with a little fear, and said, with another profound curtsy, "The will of such as you, madam, must be a law to such as me; and whatever you may be pleased to judge proper, that is the thing I shall do."

“ You are a very excellent and well-behaved person, in all ways, Mrs. Hardwood,” replied the condescending Sister Agatha. “ But it will be more proper, and more satisfactory in every way, that you should not go home till you have heard the opinion of Father Edgar.”

So saying, she left the room, with a very stately step, and Mrs. Hardwood remained in a state of mind which can only be described by comparing it to that of a pagan, in the days of old, who believed himself about to be admitted to a council of the gods.

CHAPTER X.

THE solemn step and aspect of Mrs. Vavasor lasted till she had fairly inclosed herself within the door of the room occupied by her cousin, Mr. Mills; for it was impossible to say who she might meet in the passages which led to it; but having safely ensconced herself within its sacred shelter, she took the liberty of sitting down, and indulging herself in a very hearty burst of laughter, before she had given Mr. Mills the very slightest hint as to what she was laughing at.

He watched her patiently enough for a minute or two, and then said, in rather a caustic tone, "When women a little past forty have such particularly handsome teeth as you have, Amelia, it is hardly fair to ask them *why* they laugh."

"I laugh not now to show my teeth, my dearest cousin, I promise you," replied the nun.

“But any attempt at explaining to you why I do laugh, must perforce be in vain, unless I could make you see a certain venerable face that I have just been gazing at. It is the old housekeeper from the castle, Father Edgar, who, having requested our holy brother Eustace to present her to me, for the purpose of holding a confidential conversation, respecting her young mistress, only waited for him to withdraw himself, in order to announce to me, with heart-breaking emotion, that the young convert is desperately in love with her reverend instructor, and being, as yet, ignorant of his high calling, has declared to her faithful servant her intention of bestowing upon him her hand in marriage, with as little delay as possible.”

“Well, my good friend, I see nothing very amusing, and certainly nothing very new in this; for it is precisely what we have been expecting to hear from the young Apollo apostle himself for some time past.”

“No, no, dull man! It is not the fact itself, which, I grant you, is a worn-out incident, in every way; but it was the indescribable horror which the old woman’s shrivelled face expressed, as she stated it,” returned Mrs. Vavasor.

"And now she is sitting, or standing, or perhaps kneeling, in a paroxysm of respectful uncertainty, waiting to know whether it be your will and pleasure that Father Eustace should be made acquainted with this terrible disaster, or not. What say you?"

"I do not imagine it will make much difference, will it?" returned Mr. Mills, with rather a playful expression of countenance. "You do not suppose our holy brother to be ignorant of the fact, do you?"

"Yes, I do," replied Sister Agatha, promptly. "Had he fully made up his modest mind to believe it," she added, "he would not have left it to this old housekeeper to tell us the wondrous tale. His own part of the romance he told you, dutifully enough, long ago, and you would have had this sequel, never doubt it, had the modest youth been certain of the fact."

"Do you suppose he has any idea of what the old woman's errand is?" demanded Father Edgar.

"I think it probable that he may have suspected it; for he looked most horridly pale and woe-begone when he came to tell me that the housekeeper from Cuthbert Castle wished to

speaking to me on the subject of her young mistress. He would not have looked so wretched if he had not suspected *something*, but I feel quite sure that his mind is in doubt as to the object of her errand."

"And what is your opinion, holy Sister Agatha, as to the question of telling or not telling him of it?" demanded Father Edgar.

"I advise that he should *not* be told," she replied. "If they are both in the state of mind which we have reason to suppose, the longer they go on without coming to an explanation, the better; for such feelings as theirs are just now, cousin William, go on, as some of us know right well, increasing and increasing in strength, so that the longer the denouement is delayed, the more decisive it is apt to be when it does come."

"That is quite true, holy sister," returned the fictitious Mr. Mills. "And what, in this case, do you suppose this decisive denouement will produce?"

"Nay, I know not," she replied; "but I think it very highly probable that 'the last scene of all' will be the greatly-to-be-desired profession of the heiress. For I really do not well see what a girl can do, after confessing

that she is in love with a monk, except taking the veil."

"You are an excellent adviser in such matters, Sister Agatha, which is precisely the reason, or, at any rate, one reason for which I brought you here. So pray return to your visitor, and make her clearly understand that I greatly disapprove her communicating to Father Eustace anything that her young lady may have said to her in confidence; and you may tell her also, if you please, in the way of consolation, that I shall pray for the parties afflicted with this unfortunate malady of the mind, and that I strongly recommend her doing so likewise. This will quiet her effectually."

Mrs. Vavasor bent her head in token of acquiescence, and added a smile in token of approbation, and then turned to leave the room.

"Stay yet a moment, Amelia," said the holy man, stepping hastily before her. "Be pleased to tell me what it is your purpose to say to our reverend brother, should he chance to inquire on what subject the venerable housekeeper of the castle had thought it necessary to consult you?"

Mrs. Vavasor paused for a moment, and then replied, "I should recommend that he should be told that it was on the subject of the young lady's first communion that she was anxious for advice. It is obvious that as long as she is ignorant of the sacred calling of her admired friend, Mr. Stormont, he cannot be employed to administer it to her, and it is very natural, is it not, that the pious old woman should be anxious to know who could?"

"Assuredly," replied Father Edgar, with another approving smile. "You well deserve to fill the place of abbess, and that, too, in a community of sufficient importance to make your talents of real service to the church. As soon as we have made a nun of the heiress of Cuthbert, Amelia, our next care must be to make an abbess of you."

"So be it, reverend father!" replied the lady, demurely. "I shall not shrink from performing any duties which the church, in her wisdom, may see fit to assign me."

Having said this, with an air of very exemplary humility, she turned about, and left the room.

On returning to her anxious visitor, she found her looking the very picture of meek

expectation, awaiting the answer she was to receive, with no more idea that it was possible to refuse obedience to it, than if it had been a decree direct from Heaven that she was waiting for, and which was to reach her by a special messenger from the realms above.

“Mrs. Hardwood,” began Sister Agatha, with great solemnity, as soon as she had closed the door after entering—“Mrs. Hardwood, it is the opinion of the venerable Father Edgar that you should on no account communicate to his young brother, Father Eustace, any hint or intimation whatever concerning the erroneous idea conceived concerning him, by the well-intentioned young lady whom he has had the good fortune to convert from a most odious heresy, to the blessed faith of the only true church! He also bids me tell you, my good and pious Mrs. Hardwood, that his prayers will be offered up for the protection, during this period of peril, both of the excellent young priest, and his ignorant, but in no way guilty convert. He also bids me say, that he requests and requires from you earnest and constant prayer, having the same object in view. And moreover, it is his wish that I should point out to you, in order to guard you from stum-

bling into that fatal pitfall of unenlightened Christians—the *wish to do right*, that if, after this solemn warning, you should hint to Father Eustace anything relative to the disclosure which you have made to me to-day, he shall account you guilty both of sacrilege, and disobedience.”

On hearing these last words, the poor woman started, as if she had seen a chasm at her feet, deep as the centre of the earth, and filled with the faithful servants of the powers of darkness, all ready to clutch her, and make her their slave for ever, should she, in the very slightest degree, disobey the command she had received.

Having recovered the first shock, which the threatened denunciation of Father Edgar's anger occasioned, she pronounced the most solemn promise that she could find words to form, to the effect that, unless it should please God to deprive her of her reason, Father Eustace should never know from her what the state of her poor young lady's mind was, concerning him.

“That is quite right, my good Mrs. Hardwood,” returned Mrs. Vavasor, soothingly. “That is all that is required of you—except, indeed, your prayers. You will not refuse us

the benefit of your prayers, good Mrs. Hardwood?"

It was not, as it seemed, without difficulty that the poor woman abstained from falling at the feet of the holy lady; for *holy* she was now quite sure she must be, from her using the expressive word *us*. But she felt that it would be a grievous sin for her to know more than she was told; and therefore she abstained, contenting herself by bending her knees to the fullest extent that a curtsy could permit, and replying that, thanks to the Holy Virgin! she knew her duty too well to have a single thought, or notion, of her own, upon any point, where she could be so blessed, and favoured, as to be taught, in the truly saint-like manner in which she had been instructed that day. And so she departed, thinking herself a most highly-favoured Christian, and firmly persuaded that, as "the church" had taken the matter in hand, it was quite certain that everything would go right.

Father Eustace watched the departure of the old woman from his window, and lost little time in descending the stairs to the sitting-room of his gracious "aunt."

He dreaded to hear what she might have to

say to him; but there was also a feverish impatience, in his desire to do so, that would have rendered delay unsupportable.

He found Mrs. Vavasor very peaceably engaged in reading a newspaper; nor did his entrance appear of sufficient importance to cause any interruption to her employment.

Was it possible that she could have listened to such a communication as he was almost certain Mrs. Hardwood had come to make, with such utter indifference as she now displayed?

No, it was not possible; and he instantly began to accuse himself of the most audacious, as well as the most contemptible vanity, in having permitted himself to suppose that the fatal passion which glowed in his own bosom, had been communicated to that of Juliana.

At the first moment, this idea brought nothing but anguish with it; and it was only by a desperate struggle with himself that he found power to say, with apparent composure,

“May I ask you, Sister Agatha, to tell me what the Cuthbert housekeeper had to communicate to you?”

“Certainly you may, Brother Eustace, and certainly I will tell you,” she replied, civilly, laying aside the newspaper. “She is in great

trouble, poor woman, about her young lady's first communion. Her great anxiety arises from the secrecy which we still think it necessary to preserve respecting your profession, my good brother. We both of us—I mean, Father Edgar and myself—we both think that, although as yet, there is fortunately no reason to suppose that your young convert sympathizes in the sort of tender folly, of which you, my dear brother, have so frankly made confession, yet there can be little or no doubt of your having very considerable influence over her; the which, we trust, by the merciful assistance of the Holy Virgin, may at last work to her eternal benefit, by making her the spouse of Christ, and by placing her worldly treasures in the hands of the Holy Company of Jesus, for the honour and glory of God."

Father Eustace with difficulty suppressed a groan. But he did suppress it, and a silence of some minutes followed the pious harangue of Sister Agatha, which was broken at length by the miserable Edward Stormont, who said, in an accent of the most earnest entreaty, "Let me implore you, Sister Agatha, to change your policy in this matter, and to use your influ-

ence with Father Edgar to induce him to change his also. Let me tell this truly excellent and truly pious young lady the truth. It will not only render my task infinitely more easy, but enable me to pursue it in a manner which, to such a mind as hers, would, I am confident, prove infinitely more successful than anything I can do now. Befriend me in this, Sister Agatha; use your holy influence with Father Edgar to yield to me in this, and all will yet be well."

"Father Edgar is at this moment engaged in his own sitting-room, preparing dispatches for Rome. I will go to him, and communicate your request. Perhaps he will leave his occupation, important as it is, in order to discuss this point with you in person."

Important as this reported occupation might be, it did not prevent the holy father from joining his young brother immediately. But he came alone. Whatever influence the nun might have thought it fitting to use, had doubtless been exerted before her cousin and confessor emerged from his retreat. But of whatever nature this influence might have been, it did not appear to have produced any very sooth-

ing effect on the superior, for he entered the drawing-room where Stormont awaited him, with a most stupendous frown.

“What is this message that you have thought proper to send to me, young man?” said he, somewhat vehemently closing the door behind him. “But, before you answer me, let me recapitulate the nature of my business here, which, if I understand the message delivered to me by our holy sister aright, you appear either to have forgotten, or utterly mistaken. I am in England, sir, as you well know, for the purpose of watching over, and regulating EVERYTHING in any way connected with the interests of the most holy Company of Jesus, the which watching over and regulating, brings upon me such a burthen of heavy business, that I am often, as the saints know, at a loss to find an hour of leisure that may be employed for the salvation of my own soul. From this enormous and incessant press of the most important business that can be trusted to man to perform, I am called, and I may say dragged away, for the especial purpose of strengthening with my knowledge and experience, a young brother whom our venerated General has thought proper to appoint

to the performance of a special task, which is, doubtless, both important, and difficult. I have obeyed this summons. I have left everything, in order to come here, and assist you with my advice. And now, sir, you have deemed it proper and decent to make a messenger of a holy nun, to convey to me your desire that I would abandon all my own ideas on the business in hand, and consent to adopt yours."

The darkly-frowning superior stopped here, and, as it seemed, for want of breath, for there was something in his eye which very plainly said that he had not finished. But poor Stormont saw it not. Crushed to the earth by the weight of a power to which he had vowed OBEDIENCE, with all the solemnity, and with all the sincerity, also, with which it is possible for man to bind himself, he stood before Father Edgar, even as he had stood before Scaviatoli, with his hands crossed upon his breast, and his eyes fixed upon the ground, the living image of a helpless bigot, in whom this blind submission had stifled all the energy of moral freedom, and all the individual responsibility of manly honour.

The elder Jesuit looked down upon his

younger victim with a sinister smile. He saw that he was still a slave; and knew that, let him think of him and his judgment as he might, there would be no danger of his breaking his chains, although they should drag him into the lowest depths of misery, and sin, so long as his spirit remained thrall'd by the belief that his vow of absolute unquestioning obedience was a more sacred, and a more binding law than any other which either God or man could teach him.

Father Edgar gazed upon him for a minute or two with very considerable satisfaction; and then again broke silence with these words:—

“Mr. Edward Stormont—or—Father Eustace, the vowed priest and monk, of the holy Jesuit community of the Sacred Heart, answer to which name you please, but answer consistently. I am at this very hour engaged in preparing dispatches for Rome, or, to speak more plainly, for the eye of the General of the Jesuits, Scaviatoli. You cannot suppose that these dispatches will be made up till you, sir, have enabled me to inform him whether you are the same honoured individual, the same highly-esteemed Father Eustace of the Sacred Heart, to whom he confidingly and fearlessly

entrusted an enterprise to the which he attaches very high importance, or the unfrocked monk, Edward Stormont. Speak, young man! As which of these am I to report you?"

Even at that, to him, very awful moment, poor Stormont felt at his heart something like a faint fluttering of independent conscience, that led him to make one last effort to save Juliana from the delusion which still, in his heart of hearts, he believed might prove injurious, if not fatal to her peace; and he replied, with something like a gloom of manly freedom in his eye, "Must I be reported as an unfrocked monk, if I plead for permission to make my sacred calling known to Miss de Morley?"

The first part of the venerable Father Edgar's reply to this appeal, was a sneering laugh.

"We will let our General judge for himself, young sir, as to which title he may decide to bestow upon you. We will merely mention, in order that he may be at no loss how to decide, that my opinion is against this disclosure being made, but that yours is for it; and that such being the case, you persist in wishing that your own opinion should be acted upon in pre-

ference to mine. I confess that I think if my statement stops here, that it is probable our venerated General may be apt to decide against your continuing to consider yourself as a monk of the Order of the Sacred Heart. But in order to prove that I am disposed to be lenient towards you, I shall have no objection to stating, in your defence, that this rather remarkable instance of disobedient rebellion on your part, is solely occasioned by your tender pity for the amorous propensities of your young convert, and from the consciousness that it is impossible she can look at you when divested of the shelter of a monk's cowl, without falling so desperately in love as to endanger her life or her reason. That, I presume, young man, will be the proper phrase? Shall I thus report you to Scaviatoli? Alas! alas! it was not thus that he reported you to me! Our General, Brother Eustace, predicted a different career for you."

Edward Stormont raised his eyes to the face of his superior, and gazed at him for a moment steadily, but without any shadow either of reproach, or disrespect. At length he said, with a degree of resolute composure which a little surprised Father Edgar—

“I have neither the power nor the wish to influence your report of me, and my conduct, to the General. I am bound to believe, and I do believe, that you will report me truly, Father Edgar; and that you may know how to do this with as much correctness as sincerity, hear me now declare, that rather than disappoint the good opinion which the holy Scaviatoli has formed of me, I would willingly fall on the earth before you, and breathe my last sigh at your feet!”

“That does not sound like rebellion,” returned the elder Jesuit, throwing aside the gibing look and tone which he had assumed. “But you speak too figuratively, Brother Eustace. Let me learn from you now, as briefly as you can speak it, your determination, whether it be your purpose, in your future visits to Cuthbert Castle, to act according to my judgment, or your own?”

“It is my determination,” replied the young priest, slowly and deliberately, but with lips that were both pale and trembling—“it is my determination to be guided in this matter by the authority that has been placed over me. I disclaim all wish, all intention, of judging

for myself; my vow forbids it, and by my vow I will abide."

Having spoken these words, he again meekly bowed his head, and without raising his eyes from the floor, left the room.

Were we to follow him, we should find ourselves in the little chapel-like closet near his bed-room, and see him prone upon the steps of its altar. But we should neither see, nor guess, all the complicated misery which gnawed his heart. It must be a fearful agony for a man who would willingly die, rather than forsake the path of duty, to feel that he no longer knows clearly where that path lies, and still less, to what it leads!

But beyond all question, there is much consolation to a tender conscience, especially where the judgment has been obscured and weakened by a delusive education, in creeping under the shelter of authority. Let us once believe that obedience to human authority is our first duty, and its performance, whether its special mandates be pleasant, or the reverse, becomes such an effectual lullaby to conscience, that its voice can never greatly torment us more.

Unfortunately for poor Edward Stormont, his belief in the necessity of this obedience was

sufficient to render it his law, yet was it not quite strong enough to stifle the still small voice of truth which yet whispered, though feebly, to his heart.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Juliana left her mother in the manner which has been described some pages back, in order, as she said, to enjoy the last moments of light upon the western terrace, she did walk forth to hold mature commune with her thoughts, instead of holding premature commune with her mother.

The subjects upon which she had to meditate were not of a nature to be dismissed lightly, and her walk was not finished till a full hour after the sun had gone down. During this interval she very deliberately recalled all that Miss Stanberry had said on the subject of her mother's attachment to Mr. Wardour, and joining to it the fair amount of her own observations, she came to the conclusion, that she should be doing a very kind and dutiful act by breaking the ice, and leading Lady Sarah to avow her attachment, and she

determined that she would not retire to rest that night, till she had done it.

It is not often, perhaps, that a daughter feels so much sympathy in a mother's love affair as Juliana did. But there were many reasons for this. The most obvious, perhaps, was the impossibility that even a daughter could overlook the undeniable fact, that her ladyship was still quite young enough, and handsome enough, to be the heroine of such a history. And then came the old doctrine of sympathy, so well described by the umwhile Dean of St. Patrick's:—

“ But should a neighbour feel a pain
Just in the part where we complain,
How many a message will he send !
How many a prayer that we may mend !”

And so the gentle Juliana, feeling her own heart throb—nay, sometimes ache too, on account of this same tender passion, had much of the fellow-feeling thus described.

But there was yet another cause, stronger than all the rest, which led the affectionate heart of the young heiress to wish most fervently that her mother might be happy in a second marriage—which fervent wish arose

from her so very well remembering how unhappy she had been in her first.

Never, till the heavy weight which, during her bigoted husband's lifetime, had so cruelly pressed upon the health and spirits of Lady Sarah—never, till this was removed, had her daughter conceived the possibility of her being the gay-hearted, happy, animated being, which she really was. And never, till she was aware of this, had she any notion of the suffering she must have endured throughout the long years, during which this melancholy and unnatural state of mind endured.

Most delightful to her, therefore, was the idea, that she might smooth the way to her forming a connexion, which promised to be so completely the reverse of her former one; and the more she dwelt upon the idea, the charm of it increased upon her; till at length she felt, not only that she forgave, but that she was deeply grateful to Adelaide, for having led her fully to open her eyes upon the subject.

During all this pleasant meditation, it was only at short intervals, and by brief snatches, as it were, that she thought of herself and Stormont. But these brief snatches were

enough to confirm her in her resolution of not naming to her mother the attachment which she had formed, till such an explanation had taken place, between herself and her lover, as might enable her, not only to announce this attachment, but also the happy marriage which was to be the result of it.

Under almost any other circumstances, it is probable that Juliana might have felt some misgivings as to the possibility of her deceiving herself, respecting the serious attachment of a man who appeared so reluctant to declare himself. But she had a conviction of his loving her, as strong as that of her loving him; and the interpretation which she constantly put upon his silence was, that he shrunk from asking the heiress of Cuthbert to bestow herself, and her great wealth, upon a man so comparatively poor as the tenant of Langley Knoll was likely to be.

That she loved him the better for this honourable and high-minded reserve, is most certain, and ere she re-entered her castle in the hope of carrying happiness to the heart of her mother, she satisfied her own, by resolving that Stormont should not be permitted to make himself a victim by his proud disinterestedness,

but that she would find the means of making him understand that her happiness, as well as his own, depended upon his condescending to accept the hand of a woman richer than himself.

It was with the sweet smile of confiding hope for herself, and of fond and tender duty to her mother, that she re-entered the drawing-room. Lady Sarah was already dressed, and enjoying the luxury of a new book, with a pair of shaded wax-lights beside it, to act as gentlemen-ushers, who were to introduce it to her acquaintance.

“Where *have* you been, Juliana?” said her mother, looking up. “You will have little time to dress for dinner, unless you mean to brave the indignation of Hardwood, and let the fish be spoilt.”

“No, Mamma, the fish shall not be spoilt, and I will be dressed for dinner, nevertheless. Though, to say truth, I had no idea that it was so late; the sunbeams linger on the western terrace so long.” As she spoke, she lighted a side candle, and hastened to change her dress.

She kept her word; her movements, and those of her maid too, were very rapid; and the fish was not spoilt.

The conversation, while the servants remained, was quite such as it ought to have been, and no more; neither, when they were left to their pears, walnuts, Malaga, and claret, did Juliana feel at all disposed to enter, man-like, into confidential discourse with a dinner-table and wine decanters as properties. If wine opens male hearts, coffee, or, perhaps, tea more surely still, performs the same office to female ones, provided it be taken *tête-à-tête*. So for this Juliana waited, employing the interval, according to her custom at this season, in peeling walnuts for her mother.

But this pleasant period of laziness and light chit-chat came to its wonted termination, by the striking of the silver-voiced clock in the hall, which never struck eight, when the mother and daughter were *tête-à-tête*, without causing them to start from their places, like ghosts at the crowing of the cock.

Arm, and arm, together, as they had done many a time before, they walked across the hall, and seated themselves, side by side, upon the sofa. And then came the coffee, and then came the tea; but still Juliana did not seem to fancy that they were sufficiently alone.

For was not the tea to be taken out again? And did not the tea-urn make a noise? But, at last, all this was over, and the beating heart of Juliana could find no farther cause for delay. She felt trembling and agitated, she scarcely knew why. She certainly anticipated pleasure, rather than pain, from the communication; but there was something so strange, so contrary to common usage, in their respective positions, that she positively did not know how to begin. How she wished that her mother would happen to mention Mr. Wardour! That would make such a difference! Nothing, however, could be farther from her ladyship's thoughts, at that moment, than entering into a conversation concerning the Rector of the parish; so that Juliana felt that she must give up her intention altogether, or else enter upon the subject at once, without any introduction whatever.

In short, she was growing desperate; and, after a moment of mutual silence, she suddenly exclaimed, "Oh! my dear, dear, Mamma! I wonder if you know how very much I love you!"

Nothing, certainly, could be much more abrupt than this, and her mother looked into

her face with a smile, that seemed to say, "What makes you tell me that now, my Julia?"

But most true is it, that it is the first step which is ever the most difficult one. Juliana felt she had begun; and being quite determined not to stop again till she had fulfilled her project, she replied to her mother's smile, by taking her hand, and saying, "You must promise, my own dear mother, not to be angry with me, let me say what I will. Do you consent, Mamma, to promise this?"

"Yes, Julia. I think I will venture," replied her mother, fondly.

"Even supposing that I were so greatly to misbehave myself, as to talk to you in the style of a mother, or, perhaps, of a grandmother, talking to her daughter or granddaughter?"

"Yes, my dear, even in that case, I do not believe I should feel at all inclined to be angry with you. But put me to the trial. Let me hear how you mean to talk to your granddaughters."

"You shall hear directly," cried Juliana, gaily; but the bright colour which mounted at that moment to her cheek, proved that the

sport in which she seemed to be indulging had something that touched her more deeply than mere child's play.

"My dear mother," she resumed, "I wish to speak to you upon a subject of the very greatest importance to your happiness, and upon which I am most anxious to hear your opinion. You cannot be ignorant, my dear," pursued Juliana, with a vast deal of old lady-like solemnity—"it is quite impossible that you should be, of the flattering partiality which Mr. Wardour has conceived for you."

It was now Lady Sarah's turn to be agitated, and agitated she certainly was, in no slight degree. The playful manner assumed by Julia had prepared her for a joke, and nothing else; and the mention of Mr. Wardour's name at that moment, and in such a manner too, completely upset her. She attempted to say something, and, perhaps, meant that it should be playful, in reply; but she failed utterly, and, if she spoke at all, her words were unintelligible.

"My dearest mother, forgive me!" cried Juliana, throwing her arms round her. "I knew not how to open the subject, and therefore had recourse to a silly jest. I will let

you scold me for that, my dear beautiful mother, because it was silly; but I will not let you scold me for speaking to you with the freedom of a sister, rather than with the deference of a child, for it is you yourself, dearest, who have taught me to love you in both capacities. And now, listen to your bold girl with patience, for, trust me, she is in earnest now. I am neither so young, nor so stupid, mother, as not to have perceived that Mr. Wardour is very devotedly attached to you; and I certainly have sometimes thought that you were not wholly insensible to his great merit. Indeed, I think it impossible that you should be. Then why have you never let me hear of this, my beloved mother? Why have you had so little confidence in me?"

"You have never heard of it," replied Lady Sarah, returning the kiss with which Juliana concluded her last speech—"you have never heard of it, because I believed that the doing so would give you pain."

"And why should it give me pain, Mamma? Do you think my heart is of the pitiful class which suffers from beholding any affection, save that which reciprocates its own? It must be a very little heart that feels so,

Mamma, and I should not like to have anything to do with such a one. And how much longer, dear mother, did you mean to keep this secret from me?"

"For ever, Julia," replied Lady Sarah, throwing her arm round her, and impressing another kiss upon her cheek. "You are dearer to me than everything else in the world, and your happiness is, and ought to be, my first object."

"I do believe that you would make it so, my beloved mother, and I love, and bless you for it. But why do you suppose that your marrying so excellent a man as Mr. Wardour should interfere with my happiness, Mamma?" said Juliana, colouring a little as she recalled some moments, when her feelings, though not exactly hostile, were not exactly affectionate towards him.

"Indeed," she added, with great earnestness, "you have been wrong in thinking so. It would make me very happy to see you become the wife of Mr. Wardour."

"Would it, Julia?" said Lady Sarah, with very evidently pleasurable emotion, while the colour was for a moment heightened upon her delicate cheek. But with something very like

a sigh she added, "But it is too late now, dear love! Mr. Wardour has proposed to me, and I have refused him."

"And for my sake, mother!" exclaimed the heiress, with deep feeling. "How can I ever prove to you how deeply I feel this sacrifice? But it is not too late! It shall not be too late!" cried the eager girl, conscience-struck at the idea, that the shadowy sort of jealousy which, till her own heart found a second object to love, had led her to dislike the too near approach of *any one* to her mother, had perhaps caused her to refuse the man she loved. "It shall not be too late!" she reiterated.

"Hold! my dearest love!" cried Lady Sarah, colouring violently. "For mercy's sake, Juliana, do not suffer your wishes for my imaginary happiness so far to outrun your discretion, as to lead you to hint to Mr. Wardour, that if he were to offer again, he might have a better chance. Upon my word, if you do, you must shut me up in the dungeons of your castle, if you wish me to remain in it. No, Julia, everything is very well as it is. I am very, very happy now; and if you should consent to select a lord for your land, and a husband for yourself, before I am quite an old

woman, perhaps Mr. Wardour may have sufficient cleverness to find out that such a circumstance might induce me to change my mind."

"Then will you promise me, Mamma, that if I *should* marry within a year, you will be just sufficiently gracious to Mr. Wardour to suggest to him the possibility of success, if he were to be bold enough to ask again?"

Lady Sarah looked at her for a moment with surprise, for her words seemed to imply that she had serious thoughts of marrying before another year had passed over her young head. But then remembering that a whole year to the young, appears a vastly longer space of time than it does to the old, she laughed, and replied, "It will be time enough, Julia, to study ways and means for bringing our good Rector back again, when you shall tell me that you have fixed upon the future owner of Cuthbert Castle."

"Very well, Mamma, I will press you no farther, then, at present," replied the young lady, not wishing at that moment to push the subject any farther. "Only remember, dearest mother, that instead of disliking the idea of your marrying Mr. Wardour, there is nothing

you could possibly do, which would give me so much pleasure. And now I must go to bed, dearest, for the preparing myself to give you this lecture, cost my filial modesty a struggle, which has produced an atrocious headache. Good night! Say that you are not angry with me!"

The embrace which replied to this, with the repetition of the single word "*angry!*" in rather an expressive accent, sent Juliana to bed with a heart so light and happy, as to render it probable that her nervous headache would not long resist its soothing influence.

CHAPTER XII.

It is to be hoped that the reader has not forgotten the friendly visit of Mr. Mills to Mr. Curtis, nor its object, for we must now relate what took place in consequence of it.

During the time this visit lasted, the usually clear head of Mr. Curtis had felt considerably less clear than ordinary. He was no more likely to suspect that a gentlemanlike, well-informed English gentleman, who was come into the neighbourhood to pay a visit of a few weeks to a nephew, was a Jesuit monk in disguise, than he was to fancy that the President of the United States was come over incognito, in order to take measure of his estate, that he might decide what portion of it should be allotted to the Union.

In short, nothing in the very slightest degree approaching to the truth, ever flashed

across his brain for an instant; and for that reason he felt puzzled while the visit lasted, puzzled when it ended, and a great deal more puzzled afterwards, when he came to reflect upon it.

Supposing the extraordinary statements he had made to be true, it was quite certain that their having been communicated to him, was an act of kindness. No man could be more likely than Mr. Curtis to feel that the saving his son from an alliance which would entail infamy upon him, and his race, was an obligation of the very highest kind; but that was no reason that the informer should give a look that Nero might have been ashamed of, when the possibility of his son's doubting the fact was suggested.

He did not like such a look. He did not understand it. His son William was not a man to be frowned, and brow-beat, into anything; though he was one to whom honour was dearer than life. And then came the extremely disagreeable reflection, that he had to perform the office of telling this dear son, that the pretty creature he so fondly loved, and whose young heart seemed to cling to him with so much innocent, and grateful tenderness

in return, was something too vile even to be alluded to, in the presence of his mother.

Gracious Heaven! He really had to tell him this, and then to conclude the statement, by solemnly protesting that no power on earth should induce him to assign the authority upon which he had asserted it!

"It will drive him mad, or kill him!" murmured the old gentleman, as he paced up and down his study. "It will kill him, or drive him mad, either way—whether he believes it to be true, or whether he believes it to be false. And I am to be his executioner!"

"I do not believe the story, and I will not tell him of it," he exclaimed, aloud; and for a few minutes he felt inexpressibly relieved by having taken this resolution.

But then came a terrible reaction. *What if the story were true!* This idea positively caused such vehement emotion in the unfortunate squire, that the perspiration stood upon his brow.

"No, by Heaven!" he cried, "I will not bring that upon my soul! William shall hear what I have heard. It has been a dreadful blow to me, but what will it be to him?"

Gloomily and heavily he continued to pace

the room, listening nervously for the sound of his son's voice, to whom he was now doggedly determined to repeat the frightful tale he had heard, as soon as he should return to the house. But William lingered. And who can wonder? For at that moment he was walking under the shelter of the Cuthbert evergreens with Fanny! And so long did he linger, that the light faded, and the hour of dinner approached, and the old gentleman told himself that the disclosure must be postponed till after that was over. And perhaps there was some slight feeling of relief in this.

But it was not sufficient, however, to prevent his looking most dismally pale, and altogether so much out of sorts, that though it was contrary to the custom of the house to utter any remarks on the looks of its master, neither Mrs. Curtis nor her son could refrain from asking him if he felt unwell.

"Thank you, no; I never felt better in my life," was the reply to each, unvaried by the very slightest inflection of voice, or change of aspect.

He made a very bad dinner, however, and his companions, observing this, were by no means pleased to observe, likewise, that

he took considerably more wine than usual. But whether it was, that after all, a few glasses of good claret was the best remedy for his complaint, or that he had made up his mind to feel that he could do no good by making himself miserable—whatever were the cause, he suddenly appeared to recover himself in the most extraordinary manner, and instead of being sick and out of spirits, he seemed to be seized with one of the gayest fits of good-humour they had ever witnessed in him.

Mrs. Curtis and her son exchanged looks, but said nothing.

“You will think me very whimsical, wife, I suppose, but I can’t help it, if you do,” said he. “Ring the bell, William, there’s a fine fellow.”

The bell was rung, and the butler answered it.

“Just bring in that hare again, Tomkins. And tell the cook to send in a little boiling sweet sauce with it, and a hot plate.”

The man said, “Yes, sir,” and retired.

“I am as hungry as a hound, my dear—I am, upon my word,” said Mr. Curtis.

“I am not at all surprised at that,” replied his wife, with a good-humoured smile, “for I dare say you have eaten nothing since breakfast.”

“Nothing, child—nothing in the world. I have had nothing to refresh me but a visit from that very tall gentleman, Mr. Mills. And, by the by, Mrs. Curtis, I wish you would immediately get up a dinner party. Those people at Langley Knoll are all of them so very agreeable. But remember, I don’t want to have a large party. You may ask Raymond and his daughter, because they are such capital good talkers; and I will ride over myself and ask the De Morleys, and Fanny Clarence too, if she is with them, but nobody else. Remember, nobody else, except, of course, the Rector. I like to have such a man as that to bless my meat.”

“The Cuthbert Castle family, Mr. Wardour, the Raymonds, and ourselves,” said Mrs. Curtis, “that will make just nine, if Fanny comes—a very nice little party, just within the proper limit. Not exceeding the Muses.”

“Not exceeding the Muses, madam?” cried Mr. Curtis, looking as if he were going to bluster. “Why, we shall be exactly a dozen. You do not suppose that I mean to leave out my dear friends at Langley Knoll, do you?”

“Upon my word, I beg your pardon, I as-

sure you I have no wish to leave them out," replied his gentle wife; "but I believe I did not understand exactly, what you said. Shall I write to them this evening? What day will you name?"

The day was soon settled, and the again smoking hare, soon brought back, so that everything seemed to be going smoothly; and that it might so continue, Mrs. Curtis wrote a note to her friend Lady Sarah, because she knew by experience that her husband had a particular dislike to the being kept strictly to his word, when he happened in a lively fit to propose making himself useful.

But upon this occasion the case was different, for when upon their meeting, after the evening cigar, at the tea-table, and Mrs. Curtis produced her invitation notes, ready to be sent off, either that night or the following morning, Mr. Curtis took possession of the one addressed to Lady Sarah, saying, "I will take charge of this myself. To Wardour, and the Raymonds, you may send to-morrow, but I should like to have this one, for Langley Knoll, sent to-night—because, if they happen to be engaged, we must fix another day for our snug little party."

There had been something in the tone of voice with which Mr. Curtis had stated that he had been refreshed by nothing save "a visit from that very tall gentleman, Mr. Mills," which had suggested, both to Mrs. Curtis and her son, the idea that the distinguished personage so described had fallen out of favour; but they both felt, upon hearing how necessary the presence of his party was considered upon the present occasion, that they must have been mistaken, for it was quite evident that this snug little party of twelve was intended to be particularly agreeable. The note thus first dispatched produced a favourable answer, and the consequence of this was, that the horse of Mr. Curtis was ordered as soon as breakfast was over on the following morning, and that he set off at an hour rather unusually early for a morning visit, to convey the invitation intended for Cuthbert Castle.

He found, as he wished and expected, that Lady Sarah was sitting alone, for all the country-side were already aware of the remarkable fact that Miss de Morley had turned out a very studious young lady, and spent almost all her mornings in the old library.

Everybody of the name of Curtis was always

kindly welcomed by Lady Sarah, even the gruff squire himself, whom she tolerated notwithstanding his gruffness, because she knew that the rough rind was not impenetrable, and that there was a kernel worth having within.

"I am an early visitor, my Lady Sarah," he began, "but I wanted to say five words to you before any of your fashionable morning visitors arrived." She assured him that he was not at all too early, and then he resumed his speech, by adding, "I want you to do me a favour, Lady Sarah."

"Do you?" she returned, smiling. "What is it? But I think I may promise to grant it even before you tell me."

"That is very kind of you," said he, "and I do not think you will find me disposed to abuse your confidence. The greatest part of the favour, however, must consist in your promising to keep it secret."

"Indeed! Upon my word that sounds rather alarming; must I tell no one, Mr. Curtis?—not even Juliana?"

"No, Lady Sarah; not even Juliana," he replied. "You must promise me, before I explain myself any farther, not to disclose what

I am going to ask of you, whether you grant it or not."

"I can certainly promise that," returned her ladyship, "and I do promise it."

"Thank you, my kind neighbour," said the old gentleman, cordially. "Now, then, you shall be let into the heart of my mystery, which, after all, perhaps, you will think but a silly one. But tell me, in the first place, whether it is likely that Miss de Morley will have her pet friend, Fanny Clarence, staying with her on Thursday?"

"*Likely!* assuredly, Mr. Curtis, because they are never contented unless they are together for a quiet day, or perhaps two, in every week; and as Fanny, you know, is always considered as rather an inconvenient *bodkin*, in her aunt's carriage, it is *very* likely that her visit to us next week will be so arranged, as to give her a place in ours on Thursday," replied the friendly Lady Sarah.

It may be as well to remark here, that although Miss Stanberry had seen quite enough to convince her that her dear friend, Mrs. Vavasor, was right in declaring that it was not Miss de Morley, but her own detested cousin, Fanny, who had attracted the fickle eyes of

her adored William, she was still at an immeasurable distance from believing that his heart was for ever estranged from her.

The interference of Lady Sarah had effectually frustrated her silly plot for keeping her cousin out of sight; but Adelaide still clung, pertinaciously and firmly, to the belief that Mrs. Vavasor had both the power and will effectually to prevent any rash act from being done which would render his return to allegiance vain. In plain English, she felt perfectly secure, from what the Jesuitical Sister Agatha had told her, respecting the interview between old Mr. Curtis, and Mr. Mills, that no *marriage* was in the least degree probable.

There was, therefore, no farther attempt on her part to interfere with the movements of her cousin, and when ever she was invited to Cuthbert Castle, no opposition was made to her accepting the invitation.

“That will suit us exactly, my dear lady!” returned the Squire, with great animation; “because we wish very much to have Fanny Clarence, and not at all to have her aunt and cousin. *Ergo*, they are not to be invited, and we shall trust to you for bringing your young friend. That will be very kind of you; but

that is not all I have to ask. I must now, as Mrs. Malaprop says, 'dissolve my mystery,' and I rely upon you, Lady Sarah, to assist me in my very innocent little plot. You must know, then, that I expect a person to dine with me on Thursday—quite a stranger in this neighbourhood—who came to see me yesterday, and who, upon hearing that my son was about to be married to Miss Clarence, looked as if a pistol ball had been sent through him. Upon my asking what ailed him, he made some attempt to disclaim the emotion which was so visible, but being strongly pressed, he confessed that he had known a young lady of that name, concerning whom some very disagreeable reports were in circulation."

"About Fanny Clarence!" exclaimed Lady Sarah, indignantly, "impossible!"

"I said much about the same thing," returned Mr. Curtis; "but it only seemed to convince my friend that I was too completely deceived, and deluded, to hear reason, and he therefore begged leave to drop the subject. I replied, that I was perfectly willing to do so, but that I would certainly take care to keep the young people apart, till some inquiries had

been made concerning her. Now, my firm conviction is, that there must be two young ladies of the name, or else that —— But no matter as to what else I may conjecture. All I want is, to bring our Fanny Clarence before his eyes as somebody else; if my friend knows her, and she knows him, I will believe all he has said. But if not, I shall again be as happy a man as I was before I heard this dreadful tale. But, in any case, I have promised not to commit him; and I am sure you will not make me break my word, either by speaking of what I have now told you before, or after, the meeting.”

Lady Sarah readily assured him that she would speak of it to no one, and after reflecting for a moment, added, “But you must take care, Mr. Curtis, that this stranger friend of yours does not hear Fanny announced by name.”

Mr. Curtis smiled. “Your ladyship is quite right,” said he, “and to avoid this, I will beg of you, on arriving, to let your shoe-string be broken, as a reason for turning into the breakfast-room to the right, instead of going on to the drawing-room on the left of the hall. I will take care of the rest.”

“I know the localities too well to blunder,” replied Lady Sarah, “and I promise to enter the breakfast-room with our little Fanny, before she makes her appearance in the drawing-room.”

The thanks of Mr. Curtis for this promise were much more copious than it was usual with him to offer, and he left the castle in the highest good humour, convinced that if his new friend, “the very tall Mr. Mills,” had any sinister object, and, as he most strongly suspected, had uttered, knowingly, an atrocious slander against Fanny, he had laid a plot of so admirably subtle a texture, as to render it impossible for him, and his slander, to escape detection; whereas, on the other hand, if all he had spoken were true, his son would be preserved from the fatal alliance he meditated, by such an exposure of the dishonour of the wretched girl who had entangled his affections, as to make him at once consent to a separation, without his having himself to interfere to effect it.

That the surly, worthy Squire Curtis, was not a practised, or, in any way, an accomplished plotter, may be easily perceived by these most

clumsy manœuvrings. There was no more chance of his getting the long-tried and highly-esteemed Jesuit priest and monk, Father Edgar, to run his head into such a noose as he had thus prepared for him, than there was of getting him to confess that all he had said about Fanny Clarence was a lie, and that by far his strongest reason for saying it, was the pious hope of bringing woe to the hearth, and the heart, of a Huguenot.

But fate managed much better for him than he could have contrived to manage for himself. Just as he was mounting his horse at the gate of the castle, in order to return home, he saw Fanny Clarence approaching the mansion, on foot, and alone.

Whether it was owing to any of the good gifts possessed by Fanny herself, or solely on account of the interest she inspired as being the beloved of his son, it might be difficult to say, but certain it is, that the rude, and rough, Squire Curtis already felt a very considerable degree of affection for her; and when he now saw her pretty graceful young figure issuing from the dark shelter of the evergreen shrubberies, and slowly approaching the house, it

struck him that he should like to coax her into taking a little walk with him, before she made her visit at the castle.

The terms on which they stood to each other—for she was already his accepted daughter-in-law, although this fact was as yet known only at the castle, and his own house—fully justified his taking the liberty he meditated, and he therefore scrupled not to give his horse into the care of his groom, with orders to lead him to the south lodge gates, and there await his coming.

Fanny had just parted from the son, whom she had sent home by another path, that they might not emerge from the shrubbery together, and it was not without emotion that she saw the stern-seeming father approaching her, on whose kind reception of herself, and her desolate mother, so much of her future happiness depended.

But the compliment he paid her in thus dismissing his horse (for she witnessed the whole proceeding) was very deeply felt, and it was with blushes and smiles very beautifully blended that she hastened forward to meet him.

Miss Stanberry was by no means wrong

in thinking that her little penniless cousin Clarence was a very captivating sort of person. There was something inexpressibly attractive in the mixed air of shyness and confidence with which she accepted the old gentleman's invitation to walk with him, and indulged his evident wish that she should endeavour to feel at her ease, and be conversable. They had not, however, proceeded very far before they both of them descried the figure of a solitary horseman slowly and cautiously descending the bit of steep ground which faced the western lodges.

"Who is that?" said Fanny, with the species of curiosity which village folks feel at the sight of a stranger.

"It is—I think I know who it is," replied Mr. Curtis, "and I must absolutely speak to him. But, nevertheless, my dear, I have got something that I particularly wish to say to you, before we part this morning. Will you promise to walk on slowly, while I cross over by this little path here, to meet him.—Nay, why should you not walk from this road to the other, by the little path, along with me? I see no reason why we should part company. When we get to that clump of firs yonder, you shall stop, while I go on to say five words

to him, and then I will come back and join you again."

It is possible that Fanny Clarence, although a very good-natured girl, might not have complied so very obediently with all these complicated instructions, had the gentleman who uttered them been any other than the father of William Curtis; but as it was, she nodded and smiled a most obedient assent, and having reached the fir clump, prepared herself to wait beneath its shelter till the return of the squire.

With a very brisk and active step the old gentleman left her, and pursued his way to the western gate, which he reached about two minutes before the horseman—who was no other than the long-legged William Mills, Esq.—entered it.

Father Edgar was at that moment on his road to Cuthbert Castle, for the purpose of ascertaining from the ladies there, who the "*small party*" was to consist of, whom the Langley Knoll trio were invited to meet at Mr. Curtis's.

His reason for the which inquiry may be easily guessed at. The cautious monk, however, though he thought such an inquiry very clearly a part of his duty, had little or no fear

that he should be told that Fanny Clarence was to make a part of it. William Mills, Esq. was not accustomed to find that any of his statements fell to the ground, and he could hardly be said to believe it possible that Mr. Curtis would have suffered Fanny Clarence to enter his doors, after what had been stated to him concerning her; much less that he would have invited the family at Langley Knoll to meet her.

Nevertheless, he thought it his duty, as I have stated above, to ascertain the fact upon grounds more certain than mere conjecture.

On reaching the lodge gates, Mr. Curtis took off his hat, waved it both gaily and courteously, and then stood still to await the approach of the horseman.

"On foot, Mr. Curtis?" said the monk, drawing up his horse, and courteously presenting his hand. "I do not remember ever meeting you walking before. Has your ramble taken you as far as the castle?"

"Yes, I have this moment left it," replied Mr. Curtis, "and I am very glad I did not leave it five minutes earlier; for if I had, I should have just missed you, which I should have been heartily sorry for. You have not

forgotten, I am sure, for you are too much my friend to think lightly of what passed—you cannot have forgotten what you said to me yesterday.”

“No, indeed, I have not!” replied the Jesuit, with a sigh.

“Then get off your horse, Mr. Mills, will you?” resumed the squire. “I have something that I am very anxious to say to you. I will lead him for you—he looks as gentle as a lamb.” Mr. Mills immediately dismounted, but declared himself quite ready to lead the horse himself.

“And what is it you have to say to me, my good friend?” said he.

“Do you see the figure of a woman parading backwards and forwards there, under those trees? I want you to look at her.”

“Who is it?” returned the monk, rather nervously. “If it be that unhappy young creature of whom I spoke to you yesterday, I must entreat that you will spare me the pain of meeting her. I knew her well, while she was yet a child—and innocent! Indeed, Mr. Curtis, I could not bear to see her.”

“How can you suspect me of trying to entrap you into a meeting that must of necessity

be so painful? No—no, my good sir, I trust that I shall never again see the wretched creature whose history you gave me yesterday, as long as I live!”

“Who is that lady, then?” demanded Mr. Mills.

“It is the Lady Harriet Hartley, the beautiful niece of Lady Sarah de Morley. She is just arrived at the castle, to pass a month with her aunt, and her heiress cousin, previous to going to London for the season. It seems that my Lord Honiton, her father, has left her here, and is to return for her.”

“Lord Honiton is, I think, the brother of Lady Sarah?” said the Jesuit, thoughtfully.

“Yes, he is; and moreover he is a nobleman with whom any family might be proud of forming an alliance. Now it has struck me, my good friend, that there is something absolutely providential in the unexpected arrival of this very lovely creature at this moment. God bless you, my dear Mr. Mills, that poor lost creature, Fanny Clarence, is no more to be compared to Lady Harriet Hartley, than a milk maid is to a duchess. Let us just walk on together as far as the fir trees. You know the other girl—bad luck to her for all the mi-

sery she has caused me!—and I positively long to hear you say whether you don't think this one likely enough to make my darling son forget her."

Father Edgar felt all the ascetic pride of an old Jesuit monk swelling at his heart, as he heard himself thus called upon to pass judgment upon the comparative allurements of two young heretic girls, whom he would have seen drowned together in a string, like a couple of kittens, with marvellously little remorse. The reference, too, seemed as ridiculous as it was disgusting, and had not the honest squire proved himself as good an actor, at the nonce, as ever a Jesuit could have been, his companion probably might not only have been rendered angry, but suspicious by it.

But Mr. Curtis threw such an air of *naïve* and genuine eagerness into his manner, that the monk was completely taken in, and instead of giving any of his attention to the discovery of any possible hidden motive in the breast of the squire, he contented himself with taking especial care that the purity of his own intentions should not be suspected.

He, too, reasoned, like his beautiful accomplice, Miss Adelaide, that he had per-

formed his part of their bargain in strict conformity to the stipulated conditions of their contract; and it was much more from hatred to the sturdy Huguenot beside him, than from any particularly friendly feeling towards Miss Stanberry, that he determined, as he complied with the squire's request, and walked onwards with his horse's bridle in his hand, that he would get Mrs. Vavasor to give her a hint, that a friendly, though anonymous communication addressed to the Earl of Honiton, on the subject of the young man's falsehood, and inconstancy, might become as successful against this new rival, as his own interference had proved against her cousin.

A few minutes' walking brought the two gentlemen to the sheltered spot where Fanny, while dutifully waiting for her future father-in-law, beguiled the time, as she walked up and down the smooth brown path, under the fir trees, in meditating upon the fatherly intimacy and kindness of his manner to her, and in thinking how much pleasure she should have in describing it all to her dear mother.

“Well! my dear lady, (and here the squire sunk his voice a little,) are you not almost tired of waiting for your old beau? Well!—

well! It is very pleasant to be young, there is no doubt about it. But old gentlemen have some privileges that young ones have not."

By this time Fanny Clarence, who had smilingly hastened her steps as he approached, was close to him, and certainly looked lovely enough to justify all he had said in praise of her beauty.

"Give me leave, my dear," he said, "to present to you my friend, Mr. Mills, a gentleman recently come to this neighbourhood, whom it is likely you will often have the pleasure of meeting, for we are a very sociable set of people here."

Fanny bowed very gracefully in return to the monk's stiff salutation, and old Curtis watched them both the while, with quite sufficient earnestness to convince himself that neither had ever beheld the other before.

The pure and perfect sensation of happiness which this conviction occasioned him, was in exact proportion to his devoted affection to his son, whose fate in life was decided by it.

"Thank God!" was the ejaculation which he murmured, inaudibly, as he watched them; and then he was seized by a strong desire of indulging in a little explanation with his dear

friend; but his better nature prevailed. It could not be done without risking pain to Fanny, and fortunately remembering that "all is not lost that is delayed," he suddenly turned again, with his well-beloved little daughter on his arm, into the path which led across to the other lodge. His leave-taking with the illustrious Jesuit was not very ceremonious. It merely consisted in a very familiar sort of nod, and the words, "Good bye, neighbour. I need not ask your opinion upon the point we have been discussing, for I see it in your eyes."

The monk, as it seemed, saw something in *his* eyes too, for his usually pallid face became highly coloured, and muttering something about fearing that it was later than he had thought for, mounted his horse, and turned its head in the direction from whence he came.

The squire looked sternly after him, and if he had wished for any additional proof that he had spoken falsely, he might have found it, in his sudden change of purpose.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE *is* a tide in the affairs of men. Sometimes it ebbs, and sometimes it flows. But it is rarely that either joys or sorrows come singly.

At rather an earlier hour than either Mr. Curtis, or William Mills, Esq., had chosen for setting off upon their respective visits to Cuthbert Castle, Father Eustace had already taken advantage of the permitted entrance by the private door communicating between the chapel and the park, and having passed some time in silent solitary prayer at the foot of its little altar, proceeded as usual to pay his daily visit in the library, and, as usual, found Miss de Morley drawing there.

Nothing could be much more decidedly in defiance of all ordinary ideas of propriety than these daily meetings; yet both the par-

ties concerned held themselves somewhat more than justified in commencing and continuing this practice. On the part of the gentleman, the firm persuasion that he was only doing his duty is easily understood; for not only was every visit intended to continue, and bring to perfection, the work of conversion, and was therefore a manifest perseverance in the due performance of the task which he had undertaken, but the punctual performance of these daily visits was in strict conformity with the positive, and constantly reiterated commands of his superior, the watchful Father Edgar, who never suffered a day to close without inquiring of his young brother "whether he had seen the heiress of Cuthbert?—and whether he had seen her alone?"

Nor was there a much less decided feeling of duty on the part of Juliana, when receiving those private visits, than on the part of Father Eustace, when paying them; and in her case, also, the duty was two-fold. Although as yet she had performed none of the overt and public acts which proclaim conversion, it was only because she believed, poor girl, that instead of having two priests in constant attend-

ance upon her, as was in reality the case, there was not one sufficiently within her reach to be summoned at her need.

The interviews between her and Father Eustace ever began by conversation relative to the religion of her departed father, and its holy superiority over every other. As the castle library was well stocked with Popish volumes of every age, and every quality, it was a matter of no great difficulty to Mr. Stormont to select, for the perusal of his fair friend and pupil, such works as would not only assist him in his task, but also furnish him with unfailing funds for conversation, every word of which would, he trusted, assist in bringing to perfection the great work which had been intrusted to him.

The natural and inevitable consequence of all which was, that Juliana, in her heart of hearts, believed that, instead of being indiscreet, she was performing a most sacred duty, every time she received Edward Stormont in the library, and conversed with him alone.

But the heiress of Cuthbert was not yet so far advanced in Jesuit theology as to fancy that the only duty which she had to perform in this life was to prepare herself for that

which was to follow it. At this period of her existence she most truly believed that it was her duty also, when disposing of herself and her large possessions by marriage, to select a husband holding and professing the faith of her father, and of his fathers before him.

It was, indeed, quite certain that she believed Mr. Stormont to be most devotedly attached to her, and at least equally so, that she felt persuaded she never could love any man but him. From these premises it very logically followed, that she could do nothing so every way accordant both to her religious, and her temporal duties, as the uniting herself in marriage to the man who had first opened to her the path of salvation, and first taught her what it was to love.

The fatal and never-to-be-forgotten kiss impressed upon her pale, but not insensible cheek, during the tremendously overpowering scene to which she had been exposed in the chapel, although the *first*, had by no means been the only proof which she had seen, or fancied that she had seen, of his love. The involuntary expression of the speaking eye, the tremulous motion of the lip, the softened cadence of the voice — Juliana understood

them all; they were but so many echoes of her own full heart, and she was quite sure she did not mistake them. She was as sure that he loved her, as that she loved him; and having reached this conclusion, in addition to the one before mentioned—namely, that it was her duty, both in a heavenly and earthly point of view, to marry him, nothing remained for her to do but to bring this event about as speedily as possible.

Had Mr. Stormont been possessed of a magnificent castle, and noble fortune, while she had nothing of worldly wealth attached to her beyond a competence, Juliana, with all her convert zeal of piety, would most unquestionably have let matters take their course; and if she had found that he did not love her well enough to ask her to be his wife, she would very speedily have discovered that it might be better for her to seek some other religious instructor.

But as it was, the case was widely different. Believing, in fact *knowing* that he loved her, could she fail to love him the more for the noble disinterestedness which prevented his asking for her hand?

No! no! she loved him a thousand times

the better for it; and having given sundry days and nights to profound meditation on the subject, she decided that her peculiar situation not only excused, but demanded a peculiar line of conduct. And on such a line she eventually resolved.

Her happy conversation with her mother had relieved her heart of by far the heaviest weight that pressed upon it. She had feared, tremblingly feared, that the marriage which she looked to for herself, as the only possible means of ensuring her happiness, would have a very contrary effect on the destiny of her mother. She did not believe that she would ever again consent to live in the family of a Roman-catholic, and were that the case, her own marriage with Stormont would be the means of their being separated for ever. But now the case was wholly different. Their homes, indeed, would be separate, but delightfully destined to be for ever near, and thus was the last shadow of objection to her becoming the wife of Stormont removed.

Nevertheless, it was not quite without difficulty that she screwed her courage to the ever, and always unwomanly task of being the first to speak of love. But she was urged to it by

two considerations. The first, and most precious, arose from the feeling, that she had not unsought been won. Her heart told her, and told her truly, that she *was* beloved—deeply, and for ever! The second favouring consideration was, that the step she meditated was an act of generosity—generosity to Edward Stormont!

All this had been gone over, canvassed, and reasoned upon, a multitude of times, till at length all vacillation ended, and the hour of his expected visit on the morrow was finally fixed upon in her heart as that which was to decide her fate.

She was, as usual, sitting alone before her drawing-frame, when Father Eustace entered. His recent conversation with Father Edgar, and the positive promise which had been drawn from him, that he would continue to conceal his real character and position, had affected him deeply. It was impossible to look at him without perceiving that he had been suffering greatly, and that the seat of the suffering was not the body, but the mind. He looked, to use a common phrase, broken hearted; and the phrase, in this case at least, expressed something very like the truth, for

amidst all the warring tumult of his mind, the only thought that took the form of a wish, was that which suggested the probability of his early death.

That Juliana did not read his heart aright, is very certain; but she did discover that he was profoundly miserable, without, however, being at all nearer any important truth concerning his condition, than if she had fancied him peculiarly the reverse.

As she looked at his sunken and sleepless eye, at the deathlike paleness of his noble countenance, and at the languid listlessness of every movement, she felt convinced that his life depended upon the speedy termination of the struggle between his high-minded spirit of independence, and his unconquerable love for her.

This conviction gave her all, or almost all the courage she wanted, and yet the feeling which still closed her lips was very little short of agony. Had it lasted much longer, she would certainly have fallen senseless at his feet. But while this mental strife between a steadfast purpose and reluctant will was torturing her, a somewhat similar struggle was equally torturing him. Unhappy man! He KNEW that he was beloved! In such a case

as this, where real sympathy exists between the parties, it is idle to describe their feelings by any phrase less positive. They both KNEW, and equally well, that they loved, and were beloved. And his knowing this, at least at that dreadful hour, increased his misery, much more than it consoled him under it.

Juliana had passed a very wakeful night in fixing, and strengthening, the resolution she had taken; and he had passed a night more wakeful still, during which he had examined his own situation, and that of his unhappy convert, with all the judgment that was left him, and had finally decided that the safest course he could steer, between his duty to the holy Company of Jesus, and his duty to her, would be to say to her, at once, that being obliged by urgent business to leave the country, he had come to tell her, as a last proof of his friendly regard, and as his last religious counsel, that he most strongly advised her to break through all the worldly trammels which kept her pure and holy spirit bound to earth, by entering upon her noviciate immediately, and becoming a nun, as soon as the church would accept her vows.

And thus they met each other; each bosom

throbbing with emotion, of which the other was the cause, but, alas! with thoughts and purposes how different!

A bad attempt at going through the ordinary salutations and inquiries being over, they both sat down, and then the superior strength and courage of the man was shown, for he spoke first.

But, gracious Heaven! with what difficulty did he articulate! His tongue was dry, his lips parched, and, as it seemed, almost convulsively closed. But yet he opened them, and after more than one vain effort to produce a sound, he contrived to articulate the words, "Miss de Morley!"

Juliana saw that he suffered—that he suffered dreadfully, and yet, notwithstanding all her true and perfect love, her heart felt relieved from an almost intolerable load—for could she doubt his purpose? Could she doubt that he had at length resolved to make his pride, all noble as it was, fall before his love? Thrice happy Juliana! How changed was now the task before her! No longer forced to unsex herself, in order to make him forget that she was an heiress, one look would suffice, when once he had pronounced the precious

words "I love you," to make him know for ever, and for ever, that she was his alone!

And this thought served to sustain her as she watched the almost ghastly expression of his countenance as he endeavoured to go on.

"Miss de Morley!" he repeated, "let me implore you to forgive the human weakness which thus shakes my firmness. What I am about to say to you ought, from its nature, to bring joy and peace to——" And there he stopped, for the sweet eyes of the happy Juliana were at that moment fixed upon him with such an unmistakeable expression of trustful, confiding tenderness, and her innocent young face became dyed with such a flush of

"Celestial rosy red, love's proper hue,"

that instead of proceeding with his speech, he uttered a deep groan, and suddenly springing from his seat, he dropped on his knees before it, and buried his face in his hands.

Shocked, and yet almost gratified by this vehement emotion, Juliana rose from the sofa, and approached him. She was about to pronounce his name, but ere she had uttered it, one of the most painful sounds that can greet the ears of a woman assailed her. Deep and

convulsive sobs burst from the breast of the miserable young man, and she stood beside him, no longer trembling with the delicious consciousness of being loved, but rather shuddering as the dreadful thought suggested itself that the mental struggle he had endured had been too much for his reason.

All maiden diffidence, all cold and coy decorum, vanished at once before this horrible idea, and dropping on her knees beside him, as she strove to draw his hands from his face, she cried, "Look up, look up, dear Stormont! Speak to me, dearest Edward! Speak to your own Julia!—to your wife!"

The only sound uttered in reply to these words was a groan, that sounded as if soul and body had parted to give it way.

Terrified to a degree of which words can convey no idea, she rose from her knees, she scarcely knew how, and stood beside him as if turned to stone. He rose also, and looked at her, but it was a look so haggard, and so wild, that the idea of his insanity recurred to her with so terrible a strength of conviction, that she exclaimed aloud, "Oh! Heaven have mercy on him! He is mad! And it is I who have destroyed him!"

It was much, as I should guess, the same sort of feeling which made old Hamlet's ghost say to young Hamlet—

“Oh! step between her and her fighting soul!”

that now made Father Eustace so far forget himself, and think of her, as to enable him quite gently to take her hand, and say, “No—no! Not mad! Only supremely wretched!”

The effect of these words, spoken with comparative calmness, was like that of magic.

The rigid expression of horror which had fixed the features of poor Juliana into a look that it was dreadful to behold, relaxed immediately. She even tried to smile, as she said, “Wretched? dear Edward! — wretched, because I love you?”

“Yes! even so!” was the terrible reply. “May the God of mercy help us both!” he added, looking wistfully in her sweet puzzled face, and for a moment seeming doubtful whether he should say more.

“But this *is* madness, dearest Stormont!” she replied. “Is it because you are not so rich as I am, that our loving one another is to make us wretched? If not madness, Edward, surely it is very desperate folly.”

And as she spoke she laid her hand upon his shoulder, and the next moment suffered her drooping head to follow it.

“Oh! spare me—spare me!” he exclaimed, but even as he said it, he madly threw his arms around her, pressed her closely to his bosom, and imprinted a kiss upon her lips.

The spirits of Julia had been already too much tried, and too severely harassed to stand this new and strange emotion. Her senses forsook her, and when she recovered them, she found herself stretched at full length upon the sofa, and alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

How Father Eustace got back to Langley Knoll, he would probably himself have been quite unable to tell, but that he did get there, and safely too, is certain. Father Edgar had got there too, some hours before him, and was sitting in the room which had been appropriated to his use as a study, when his young brother monk walked in, with a face as white as marble, and inquired if he were sufficiently at leisure to listen to something which he wished to say to him.

Father Edgar was at that moment looking most savagely cross; but this expression of his features was entirely lost upon poor Stormont, who was in no state of mind to pay attention to anything.

He heard him grunt an acquiescence, however, for he was waiting for it; and feeling

himself permitted to enter the room, and close the door, he did so, and seated himself in a chair, which stood vacant, immediately in front of his superior.

As an act of justice to this superior, it is but fair, before relating the conversation which followed, to state the fact that Father Edgar not only looked out of temper, but was so, in no trifling degree. I shall probably run no great risk of being contradicted by any one if I say that there is nothing which a genuine Jesuit hates so much as the having made a blunder in any of the little plotting contrivances which their professional duty, as Jesuits, lead them, of necessity, to perform.

Now, a mischance precisely of this kind had just occurred to Father Edgar, and that was the reason why he was in an ill humour.

It is true, in his extenuation, that the accident which had happened to him was only in what, to use rail-road phraseology, we should call a branch line; had it been otherwise—had the case in question concerned the main line, or general interest of the concern, there is every reason in the world to believe that Father Edgar would have acted more cautiously. But, somehow or other, the little se-

condary sort of plot arranged by Mrs. Vavasor, for the important (the really important) object of freeing the conscience of Miss de Morley from any scruples on the subject of her mother, had involved him in a species of intrigue with the Curtis family, for the purpose of repaying the services of Miss Stanberry, which the Jesuit priest of highest rank in England could scarcely help thinking rather derogatory.

He accepted it, however, upon the admirable principle, that as nothing was above, so nothing was below the attention of a Jesuit, which could, in any degree, contribute to the general success of the Company. But he most unquestionably neglected certain probabilities, or, at the very least, certain possibilities, which threatened mischance to the plot in which he thus condescended to engage himself; and these possibilities, as he now very strongly suspected, had turned against him.

It was, therefore, become of most imperative and first-rate importance, that his young coadjutor, Father Eustace, should waste no farther time in preliminaries, but bring the heiress of Cuthbert to the required state of devotion, as quickly as possible.

It was in this spirit that he now listened to

the statement of the unfortunate missionary, who had been employed upon an expedition for which he was in fact most especially fit, and unfit.

Father Eustace remained silent for about a minute after he had taken his seat; and no wonder, for never did any man enter upon a narrative with greater reluctance. But this beginning by no means suited the temper of his superior, who said, without any great affectation of ceremony—

“Begin, sir, if you please. It will not suit me to sit here waiting upon you all day.”

“Forgive me, Father Edgar,” returned the unhappy young man, “I will endeavour to keep in remembrance the value of your time, and forget, as much as may be, the pressure of my own anxiety. All my worst fears are realized respecting the effects of my mission on the unfortunate object of it. Miss de Morley is——”

“‘A hopeless heretic,’ I presume, are the words in which your homily is to conclude. You must excuse me, Father Eustace, if I take the liberty of observing, that in our profession such very slow articulation should be avoided.”

This barbarous sneer upon the enunciation

of a being so wretched, and so shaken, as poor Stormont, did little harm. There are states of being, and stages of moral suffering, in which it requires a talent still more brilliant than that of Father Edgar, to discover an opening in the heart not too much choked up with sorrow already, to offer any new point of attack. A kind word *might* have caused, perhaps, something like an additional pang, but this attempt to be insolent failed entirely.

“No, father, no, she is not a heretic; she is a meek, obedient, and most true believer!” replied Father Eustace, promptly; “but when I would have led her to the subject which is the ultimate and most important object of my mission here—when I would have spoken to her of a monastic life, she misunderstood me. The unfortunate secrecy which has been maintained respecting my calling has led to a most lamentable delusion. She believes that the interest which I have manifested for her has proceeded from an earth-born affection. Father Edgar! she believes that I love her, and has avowed that she loves me in return!”

As he pronounced these words, which seemed uttered in what might be called a spasm of desperate resolution, his complexion literally

became livid, and he seized upon the arm of the chair on which he sat, to prevent himself from falling out of it.

Father Edgar looked at him with the air of one who feels a strong inclination to laugh, but who abstains from the indulgence of his mirth, from respect to decorum. He paused, however, for half a moment, before he trusted himself to attempt a reply, and then said—

“You are an exceedingly well-intentioned young man, Brother Eustace, I am quite sure of it. Yet, nevertheless, you must permit me to say that you need a deeper, and more enlarged study of the objects, and the principles for and by which our blessed and glorious Company has been instituted, and is maintained, before you will be fully competent to manage the leading oar in any very important enterprise. Do not, however, if you please, young sir, suspect me of insinuating that our General has blundered in appointing you to the mission upon which you are now engaged. On the contrary, the statement which you have now so solemnly made”—and here again the aged monk appeared with difficulty to suppress a smile—“this very statement,” he continued, “suffices to prove, if indeed any fur-

ther proof were wanting, that he is as acute in perceiving, and seizing upon means, as he is profound in calculating, and deciding upon results.

“And methinks, Brother Eustace, that a little reflection might enable you, young as you are, to comprehend the reasonings of Scaviatoli when he selected you, as the person to be employed on this important mission. Come, tell me now, as a matter of curiosity, what you suppose his reasons were for making choice of you?”

“I have never been taught to meditate in this manner upon the conduct of my superiors,” replied Father Eustace, with the most perfect simplicity. “To obey, has been my first and almost my only lesson; and to this I have yielded myself, with all the unexamining devotion of a child to a parent.”

Had poor Stormont intended to utter the most biting reproach to his taunting superior, that it was possible for his tongue to speak, he could not have hit upon any words more to the purpose than those which he had now pronounced, for they contained the very soul and essence of perfect, finished, Jesuitism; and when placed before the haughty man whose

sneer was expected to annihilate him, as a rule offered in opposition to his own apparent doctrine, it touched and wounded him as sharply as a dart tipped with poison.

That it was not intended to do so, never occurred to him as possible, and he felt as heartily disposed to crush the heart-stricken being that stood before him, as ever a newly-stung tyrant did, to crush a wasp.

“ You are right, my good brother, you are quite right,” returned the elder monk, in a tone of gentle sanctity, “ it is thus only, after the vow you have taken, that you can hope to obtain salvation. Let it, then, suffice you to be told, that such human frailty on the part of this ill-educated young lady has been foreseen; and in that spirit of wisdom, which was bequeathed to us by the holy saint, our thrice-blessed founder, it has been decided (by those whose will is your law) that this evil shall be converted into good, even by the means of its own sin and folly—you understand me, Brother Eustace. You are, and will be absolved of sin in this matter. This frail young woman will thankfully hide herself within the all-sanctifying shelter of the cloister, and her wealth, restored to the holy power of the

church, will be converted into the means of salvation, instead of being, as it is now, a ceaseless temptation. Do you hear me, Father Eustace? The sooner you report to me the fact that Juliana de Morley is weary of the world, and willing to commence her noviciate for the vows which are to withdraw her from its troubles for ever, the greater will be the esteem, and the more marked the approval, with which you will be greeted by Scaviatoli. Do you hear me, Father Eustace? Do you understand the full meaning of what I have said to you?"

Yes, Father Eustace did hear him. And darkly, dimly he understood him also.

As the sort of horrid lurid light gleamed athwart his understanding, which made the monk's atrocious purpose visible, a tremor ran through his frame, that seemed to seize upon his heart like a fit of palsy.

But no blessed unconsciousness accompanied it. Far from feeling any of the powers of his mind forsaking him, his intellect seemed as if awakening from a long deep sleep.

"Am I to be made the tool of demons?" was the question that suggested itself; but in the next instant the noble countenance of

Scaviatoli rose to his recollection, and his young and unsuspecting heart acquitted him instantly.

“He knows not—he neither knows, nor can by possibility imagine, the deep corruption of the wretch who stands before me!” was the cheering thought that followed.

The resolution of Father Eustace was taken instantly.

In reply to the old monk’s question, now repeated, rather impatiently, “Do you hear me, Father Eustace?” the young man quietly replied,

“Yes, sir, I hear you, but you must excuse my saying anything in reply at this moment. What you have spoken has surprised me, and I will beg your leave to retire for a while.”

“For a short while it must be, then,” returned Father Edgar. “For a short while I will permit you to consult your sense of duty in private; but this consultation must not take you long. I am wanted in my own district, sir, and will no longer consent to waste my days in watching over the shill-I, shall-I, manœuvrings of such a young gentleman as yourself, who, while professing the absolute obedience of a trustworthy Jesuit, evidently conceives that it comes within the sphere of

his duty to say, 'I will,' or 'I will not,' as the fancy may take him. I shall this night send to Stockington, to order post-horses for to-morrow morning. I may go with a safe conscience, for I plainly perceive that I have at last contrived to make you understand, that a purpose conceived to be beneficial to the holy Company of Jesus is not to be frustrated by any considerations whatsoever. I can do no more, were I to remain here for ever. Before we meet this day at table—and it wants two hours to the time—I require of you that your mind should be fixedly made up, as to your final obedience, or disobedience, to my commands, and I shall make my report to Scaviatoli accordingly. You may now retire."

Father Eustace did retire. He inclosed himself within the shelter of his own chamber, and set himself to write a letter. The letter was not a long one; it was evidently not the intention of the writer that it should be so; for he selected for the purpose a very small morsel of paper. Perhaps this might have been a measure of precaution, to prevent his making that long, which, for many excellent reasons, ought to be short. And short it certainly was, yet it took rather more than half

of *the two hours* before it was completed. But it was signed, and sealed, at last, and then consigned to the pocket of the writer.

The next task that Father Eustace set himself to perform, consisted in examining the contents of a small drawer in his writing-table. This drawer contained a considerable sum in ready money, being the remains of the sum of five hundred pounds, for which he had been ordered to draw when it was settled that Mr. Mills and Mrs. Vavasor were to make part of his family.

This residue, amounting to little less than three hundred pounds, he carefully disposed of about his person. He then filled a carpet-bag of moderate dimensions, with such articles as were most needful for immediate use, and finally attired himself in a garb suitable for travelling. This done, he quietly descended a back stair which led to a laundry, which he guessed, and guessed rightly, would at that time be unoccupied. From this remote room he passed unchallenged through the drying-yard, and so on, till he reached the sheltered copse, across which ran the often-trod foot-path which led to Cuthbert Castle.

Under the shelter of this copse he remained

till the deep-toned dinner bell of the castle became audible in the distance, and then, having concealed his carpet bag among the bushes, he set off on his last walk to Cuthbert.

The private entrance from the park into the chapel was always at his command, and by this he entered, well knowing that he should find no one either in the chapel, or the library.

His heart sunk within him as he once more crossed the threshold, and then proceeded to the room where he had so lately left his victim convert. Had he not known with familiar certainty that the old housekeeper always came to give Juliana warning, when it was time to leave her favourite occupations, and dress for dinner, he might have feared to pass into the library, lest he should see her still stretched, pale and motionless, upon the sofa where he had laid her.

And notwithstanding this certainty, he trembled as he passed the door; everything, however, was still and silent as the grave. The pocket-handkerchief which she had held in her hand when she fainted had fallen on the floor. He picked it up, and thrust it

into his bosom, before his conscience had found time to whisper that the doing so was a sin. And then he drew the letter he had written from his pocket, and laid it within the lid of the colour-box, which stood upon the table at which she always sat.

This done, he stood immovable for a minute or two, gazing mournfully upon the seat she used to occupy. The tears which filled his eyes till he could see it no more, first brought him back to the full consciousness of where he was, and what he was about. And then he turned to go. But ere he reached the door, the sound of her voice as when she uttered the words, "Wretched, because I love you?" came back with such terrible truth of memory upon him, that uttering a faint cry, he rushed back again to the sofa, and madly pressed his lips upon the cushion whereon he had laid her head. In the next moment he was gone, and the door of the little chapel heavily fell-to behind him, as if to bid him a dolorous farewell.

And how came it that a man so wretched, with a spirit so truly and so deeply pious, could pass the altar steps at that terrible moment, without bending his knee in humble supplication to the God of mercy, for pardon

and for peace? Was it because time failed him? No. In that dark hour it was something else that failed him.

Believe it who must, and deny it who will, one false priest does more harm to the cause of true religion, than a whole legion of infidels. For in the first case the poison goes straight-way to the heart, and stops its vital movement; while in the second, it only makes an effort to disturb the brain, which is in most cases entirely unsuccessful, and in many others only temporary in its success. But be this as it may, Father Eustace passed out of the chapel on this occasion without having kneeled at its altar.

When the Langley Knoll dinner hour arrived, Mrs. Vavasor, and her admiring relative Mr. Mills, found themselves *tête-à-tête* in the drawing-room considerably longer than usual; and at last this *tête-à-tête* was interrupted, not by the entrance of Father Eustace, but by that of the man-servant, who filled the double post of butler and footman.

"Pray, sir, do you happen to know where my master is?" were the words he pronounced, instead of, "Dinner is on the table."

"No, not I, Giles," replied Mr. Mills, rather

cavalierly; "but I think we had better go to dinner. I should not wonder if he dined at the castle to-day, for I know he was going there."

"Well, sir, then it would be a pity to spoil the dinner by waiting," said the man, "for it is quite ready."

The dinner was accordingly ordered, and very sufficient justice done to it, though the master of the house was not there to "vouch it."

"I wonder what our extremely dull-spirited coadjutor will do next," said Mr. Mills, to his companion, as soon as they were again left *tête-à-tête*.

"I hope you will not feel averse, my dear friend, to a speedy return to your convent; for, to say truth, I doubt if we shall do much good by staying any longer here."

"No! I have had about enough of them all," replied the lady. "And I grow weary of our brother Eustace's dismal face. Do you think there is any chance of getting the girl into our convent?"

"Nothing can look fairer for it," replied Father Edgar, "if——" But before he could finish the sentence, the parlour-door was thrown open, and the man Giles entered.

“ Master is gone, sir! Master is off!” he exclaimed, with every symptom of very desperate dismay—“ off, and never said a word to nobody! I hope, as you are so near akin to him, sir, as you will see our wages paid?”

“ Off?” repeated William Mills, Esq., frowning awfully. “ What do you mean, fellow, by saying he is off? I suppose a gentleman has a right to go out of his house, and to come into it again, without asking leave of his footman?”

“ What I mean by saying he is off, sir,” replied the man, quietly, “ is that he was seen, by Richard Jones, to get into the London stage with a travelling-like carpet bag in his hand. And moreover than that, all the things have been tumbled over in his room, in a way that shows plainly enough that he *is* off, and you may judge for your own self, if you will please to walk up stairs and look.”

“ Upon my word this is very extraordinary conduct,” said Mr. Mills, rising hastily, and colouring up to his temples. “ Does he call this obe——” But stopping short before the word was fully spoken, he suddenly, and completely, recovered his composure, and said to

Mrs. Vavasor, "Young men, will be young men, cousin! There is no use in scolding. He will be back again, I dare say, in a day or two. But, nevertheless, I shall not choose to wait for him. If you have no objection, I shall immediately order horses; we will take an early breakfast to-morrow, and set off on our return home directly afterwards. You will see to this, my good fellow, without loss of time, if you please."

"I will see to everything, sir, as I am in duty bound to do," replied Giles, "provided that your honour will promise to see my wages paid, and those of my fellow servants into the bargain. I can hardly believe my own eyes, I am sure! To think of such a godly gentleman as my master seemed to be, to be after playing us such a trick as this!"

"Don't be alarmed about your wages, Giles; I will take care, before I leave the house, that everything is paid. All you have to do, is to take care, on your part, that nothing which may be owing is forgotten. But I cannot suppose it possible that my nephew should have any bills here."

"No, sir, no! Not one, to the best of my knowledge and belief. There never was a

gentleman who had such a hatred, like, to having bills."

"Very well. That, at least, is all as it should be. And now, go, Giles. Give orders about the horses, and see that everything is ready for early breakfast, and early departure, to-morrow." The man promised obedience, and retired.

"Soh!" said Father Edgar, fixing his now wide open eyes upon the face of Mrs. Vavasor; "here is a pretty priest, a pretty monk, a pretty Jesuit for you! Do you think he will ever dare to show himself in Rome again?"

"I would bet a gold rosary, to a wooden one," replied Sister Agatha, greatly excited, "that the wretch is gone there now. And it is by listening to such lies as he may choose to tell, that Scaviatoli will reward my services!"

"Listening to him! And where, I pray you, most sage lady, is my voice to be buried the while? If he be bold enough—rather let me say, if he be mad enough to go to Rome, with this tale in his mouth, trust me, Amelia,"—and here the monk lowered his voice to a deep whisper—"trust me, he will never see the light of day again!"

Sister Agatha silently returned his gaze for a moment, and then said, in a whisper still lower than that of her companion, "Will he murder him?"

Father Edgar withdrew his eyes from her face, and replied, with a slight sneer, "No, fair lady, Scaviatoli will not murder him!"

CHAPTER XV.

A FEW minutes only had elapsed, after Father Eustace had laid Juliana on the sofa in the Cuthbert Hall library, before she recovered her senses; but it took a longer interval to arrange the troubled thoughts which rushed confusedly to her brain, sufficiently to make her in any degree comprehend the scene that had passed.

That he had acknowledged his love for her, she was quite sure; though it was in vain that she endeavoured to recall his words. She was quite sure, also, that she had frankly avowed her love in return; and something, too, she remembered, but much less distinctly, of despairing words, that seemed to hint at some obstacle to their happiness, but so vaguely as to leave no definite idea whatever upon her mind, as to what that obstacle might be.

Her head was aching violently, and tears,

she knew not why, fell copiously from her eyes. But, by degrees, a bright gleam of hope again flashed upon her. The persuasion which had so long rested upon her mind respecting the generous averseness of Stormont to making her a proposal of marriage, which might be attributed to an interested wish of obtaining possession of her fortune, again recurred to her; and though she felt that this could scarcely account for, or excuse his having left her insensible and alone, the difficulty of discovering any other reason, as well as her earnest desire to believe that one in particular, brought her at length to the conviction that so it was, and that all which remained of real misery to torment her, was the difficulty of finding a proper method of making him understand that she would rather forfeit her broad lands, and all their appurtenances together, than endure existence in any other situation than that of his wife.

As to the manner of explicitly and definitively making this important truth apparent to him, to her mother, and to whomever else it might concern, there might certainly be some little difficulty and embarrassment still; but she thanked Heaven there could be no

fatal obstacle to their mutual happiness, and that the mere fact of her being too richly endowed, could not really be likely to separate them long.

Having once again indulged in this soothing train of ideas, for a long quiet hour or more, her head and heart both became tolerably easy, and she entered the drawing-room to her mother, quite unconscious that her pale face still bore evident marks of indisposition. But no sooner had Lady Sarah looked at her, than she exclaimed—

“My dearest Julia! what is the matter with you? You are as pale as death.”

For a little while Juliana faintly contested the point, declaring that she was not ill at all, but finding that these assurances by no means satisfied her mother, who continued to look at her with great anxiety, it struck her that this moment might, perhaps, be more favourable than any other, for opening her whole heart to her, and explaining her situation, both as related to her conversion to the Roman-catholic religion, and her attachment to Mr. Stormont.

To the last, Lady Sarah listened without surprise, and also without any indication of disapproval. There was a grace and dignity

in the manner of Mr. Stormont which established his claim to the position of a gentleman, beyond the reach of doubt, and fully enough of brilliant talent, and personal attraction, to account for the fascination he had exercised upon her daughter. She recognised her perfect independence, and, moreover, felt very considerable respect for her judgment; and all this, joined to the remembrance of the affectionate solicitude which she had so recently evinced for her happiness, tended to render Lady Sarah a very indulgent auditor of such a confession.

As to her change of faith, the case was widely different.

It was with a pang of very bitter sorrow that she listened to this most unexpected avowal, but she listened in silence; and Juliana, who was too well acquainted with her mother's feelings on the subject, to hope for anything beyond a degree of toleration, somewhat more gentle, perhaps, than that which had been accorded to her father, was well pleased that so it should be.

The conversation ended by a fond and cordial embrace, and Juliana retired to rest too completely exhausted by the emotions she had experienced during the day, to feel courage

for a visit to the library, a little bit of sentimentality in which she generally indulged before going to bed, in order to live over again in memory the hours which she had passed with HIM there in the morning. But this night she yielded to the "good dullness," that made her long to lay her head upon the pillow, and thereby enjoyed a night of more tranquillity than was likely speedily to fall again to her lot.

* * * * *

On the morrow, at the usual hour, she sought her favourite window, her favourite table, and her favourite chair; and then the first thing she did, was to raise the lid of her colour box, and in the next moment her eyes were devouring the following letter:—

"JULIANA DE MORLEY!

"I have laboured faithfully to instil into your mind the principles of the Roman-catholic faith; and I have succeeded. May that be my consolation, if anything can, for the misery which I have brought upon us both. The time has been that I ardently desired to see you one—as much as a woman can be—of that holy Company which keeps itself sacred and apart

from among all other Christian believers, under the blessed name of Jesus. But now I doubt and tremble; under the orders of that holy Company I have deceived you. They may tell me, and perhaps truly, that without that deception, I might not have succeeded in withdrawing you from the soul-destroying heresy in which you were bred. If this be so, dare we repine? I know not; my soul is tortured by my impious doubts. Of one thing only am I certain, that the man, and perhaps the woman too, are unworthy of the holy names they bear. Never may you know more of them and their purposes, than you know already. That I have known more, has been the great misfortune of my life; for they have caused me to live in doubt as to what was evil, and what was good. May God in mercy soon close those eyes in death, that have learnt so to look upon life! Whether I have most sinned in obeying so much, or in not obeying more, I know not; and I go to learn. Not by my own will have I deceived you, Juliana! But you have been deceived! I have no longer the right to call myself Edward Stormont, though it was once my name. I AM A PRIEST, AND A VOWED MONK. I dare not ask you to pity the

impious, the unholy pang, with which I subscribe myself,

EUSTACE,

A Brother of the Holy Company of Jesus."

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There are paroxysms of human feeling which never can be described in words; and it is no reasonable matter of regret that it should be so. Such a state of mind as that of Juliana de Morley, after reading the letter of Father Eustace, had much better be weakly imagined, than powerfully portrayed. Her mother behaved like an angel of mercy towards her; and the genuine sympathy evinced by Mr. Wardour could not, and (as a matter of fact) did not fail to make the Rector and the Dowager understand how very much better they were likely to endure the troubles and perplexities of life together, than asunder. And so they married.

One reason for hastening their union, was the necessity of obtaining London advice for Juliana; for Lady Sarah had no courage to make the effort alone. The country practitioner frankly confessed that his art was at

fault, and that he knew not what to do with her. Whether the chief seat of the malady, which in a few months had reduced her almost to a skeleton, lay in a troubled brain, or a broken heart, he owned that he could not tell, but declared also, that the treatment in the two cases ought to be very different.

And then, naturally enough, Mr. Wardour and Lady Sarah de Morley consulted together, and the consequence was, as I have stated before, that they married. But the wedding was a very sad one, and the only thing which supported Lady Sarah's spirits through it, was the recollection of her former marriage, and all the bright and brilliant hopes which had accompanied it. "Should what is to follow, be as strongly in contrast to my feelings now, as proved to be the case then, I may look forward to years of future happiness," thought she; and she wiped the tears from her still beautiful eyes, and kissed the pale cheek of her daughter, who returned the caress with a smile, the no-meaning of which made it ten thousand times more sad, than the most vehement demonstration of woe could have been.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT Father Eustace could never have been what is called a strong-minded man, is most certain, for had he been so, and at the same time honest withal, it is morally impossible that he could have submitted his intellect to the sort of slavish obedience to which we have seen it subjected. But, nevertheless, he had great steadfastness of purpose; and had his education not thrown over him a mesh of subtilties, in which his understanding got entangled from his earliest youth, he would have been a very noble creature.

On reaching London, he so earnestly set about obtaining passports, and making all other preparations for an immediate journey to Rome, that he might almost be said to have forgot that he was miserable.

And yet he might truly have been accounted one of the most unhappy beings alive!

He loved, and was beloved, but had no chance, no hope, no wish, of ever beholding the loving, and beloved one more!

He had sacrificed all his own innate ideas of right, in order strictly to fulfil the vow of obedience which he had made; and yet he stood blasted by the wrath of his superior, and had to appear before the eyes of the man he most revered with the blighting stigma of disobedience attached to him.

Yet still he flinched not from his purpose. It was from Scaviatoli he had received the fatal mission from which all his misery had arisen, and to Scaviatoli he was resolutely determined to give an account of it.

That Father Edgar would report him to their General, as one who had betrayed his trust, and failed in the first great article of the Jesuit code, he felt perfectly assured. But he did not feel so, that Scaviatoli would blame the disobedience, were the nature of it fairly stated to him; and it was to make this statement that he now roused all the energy that nature had given, or rather, that suffering had left him.

It was not that the very fullest acquittal, or even the most explicit approbation, of his

conduct from Scaviatoli, could have healed the incurable wound which had been given to his peace, but it would remove the horrible feeling of uncertainty as to the truth or falsehood of all that he had been taught to hold as sacred.

Without the sort of bracing influence which this most earnest purpose communicated to his whole existence, Father Eustace would scarcely have reached his journey's end; for there intervened in the course of it minutes, and hours, nay, whole nights of torturing and sleepless meditation, during which, thoughts and visions of what he might have been, if the great blessing of having been brought up as a Jesuit priest (for thus he had ever heard his fate described) had not been granted to him.

These thoughts were terrible, and at times seemed almost to shake his reason. But still he went on and on, for he had a purpose to perform, and this purpose, and the steadfastness of will with which it was pursued, brought him alive, and in possession of his reason, to the gates of Rome.

Nature was greatly exhausted, however, but the consciousness that he was *THERE*, and that none of the horrible fears with which he had from time to time contemplated the pos-

sible loss of reason were realized, produced so salutary an effect upon his nerves, that he slept soundly through the night, and rose on the following morning conscious that he had still strength enough left, wherewith to tell the tale he came to communicate.

The *initiated* know the manner of approach to their General too well to fear that a year's absence shall have made them forget it. The doubtful cloak, which might equally well shelter either priest or layman, was once again thrown over the graceful person of Father Eustace, and with a step almost as firm, as if he had not borne a broken heart within a wearied body, Father Eustace reached the tobacconist's small shop, exchanged the wonted signal with the unconscious-looking individual who at that moment was its only occupant, passed silently through it, and mounted the stairs.

The condition upon which this unceremonious inroad upon the privacy of the Jesuit General is permitted, is, that each of the permitted individuals, as they approach, should ascertain whether he be alone or not.

If alone, the licensed visitor is permitted to

proceed, but if not, he is bound to retire immediately by the way he came.

This knowledge is acquired as he passes along, by means of a very simple contrivance. There is one point by which the visitor passes, at which a shining knob of metal is visible, if the General be alone; but if not, no such knob is to be seen. And the signal is given without the conscious agency of any one; for if the last door leading to the apartment occupied by the General be passed by some one coming from within, the knob appears; but if opened from without, it vanishes.

Father Eustace trembled violently as he approached the place where the signal is to be consulted. He felt at that moment that all the strength he had was but sufficient for the task he had set himself, and that if another effort were required, he should fail.

His hope, his wish, wretched man! such as it was, was gratified. The brass knob was visible.

He passed on, made the slight effort necessary for opening the door of the room he wished to enter, and in the self-same moment stood in the presence of Scaviatoli.

So lowly did he bend his head in salutation, and so slowly did he raise it again, that the first glance bestowed upon him by the General was unseen; but when, at length, he raised his eyes to meet the awful countenance which he dreaded, yet longed to look upon, the same passionless aspect met his eye which had before made so profound an impression on him, as being indicative of a spirit raised above earthly things, and so habitually communing with the skies, as to render him in holiness, as in place, the first among men.

A movement of the hand gave the young missionary permission to seat himself, and having done so, he remained silent for a moment, in the hope that some question from Scaviatoli might furnish an opening to the embarrassing communication which he had to make; and he was so far right that the General, after what seemed to the agitated Eustace a long silence, pronounced the words,

“What has been the result of your mission, Brother Eustace?”

Never did look and voice more perfectly harmonize, than did the look and voice of Scaviatoli. The very life of Father Eustace seemed to hang upon the tone and temper of

the man in whose presence he stood ; and both the ear and the eye of the trembling missionary were sharpened into all the acuteness that the most intense interest could give, in order to ascertain what that tone and temper might be.

But it was all in vain. It required more power of looking inward, than is given to mortals ; and the young monk felt that if, as he had little doubt, a statement of what had happened at Cuthbert were already in possession of the General, from the pen of Father Edgar, he must enter upon his defence without having the advantage of knowing, either what the accusation against him had been, or in what spirit it had been received.

For one short moment he felt crushed, and utterly hopeless ; but in the next, a better spirit seemed to be born within him—a spirit which, though in no degree approaching to rebellion against authority, whispered to him the consolatory thought that God reads the heart of man aright, whatever his fellow mortals may do ; and once again meekly bending his head, but not in salutation to Scaviatoli, and once more tracing upon his breast the figure of the cross, but not as in the performance of any special ceremony, Father

Eustace related, with as much pure, and simple truth, as if he had never entered a Jesuit seminary, the entire history of his mission to Cuthbert, and the manner in which he had at length thought it his duty to bring it to a conclusion.

Father Eustace had at least the satisfaction of perceiving that he had no cause for fearing anything like impatience on the part of his auditor. His narrative was not a short one; it was impossible that, with anything like justice to himself, he could make it so. But no symptom of wishing that it should be shorter was perceptible.

There were no fidgeting little movements for placing himself more at ease in his chair, no indications of an incipient propensity to cough, no doubtfulness as to whether it were preferable that the right foot should be crossed over the left, or the left over the right. Had Scaviatoli been made of iron, he could not have remained more firmly fixed in the attitude of mute attention which he had assumed from the moment that Father Eustace was placed before him, than he did.

At length the long narrative, including the most full confession of all the weakness which

had made his task at once so delightful and so terrible, came to an end. The concluding sentence was in these words—

“Forbidden by Father Edgar to declare my sacred calling to my unhappy convert, I resolved to see her no more. But in order to do justice to that sacred calling, and not to leave, by my sudden absence, such an impression upon her mind as might tend to shake her conversion, I stated the truth in writing, furtively placed the paper where I knew she would be sure to find it, and fled.”

“*And fled,*” repeated a voice that sounded wondrously like an echo. Father Eustace started. Was the General of the Jesuits a ventriloquist? Or was there some unseen listener, who by the repetition of that accusing word marked the delinquency that attached to it?

The eyes of the returned missionary were fixed upon the ground, as he thus concluded his narration, and he therefore knew not whether the lips of Scaviatoli had moved; but when, upon hearing these words, his eyes were raised with all the quickness that such a circumstance was likely to produce, it was almost impossible for him to believe that they had

proceeded from him, for the same seemingly immovable stillness continued to hold his features fixed, as if under the influence of some magic power, that must be withdrawn, ere they could move again.

But from whatever source this iron stillness came, it was now relaxed, and the following interrogations were put by Scaviatoli to his visitor, with the most perfect gentleness and civility:—

“Do you happen, Father Eustace, to possess a copy of your farewell note to Miss de Morley?”

“No, holy father! It was written in great haste and agitation. Having once taken the resolution of stopping short in a career which seemed, either by my misfortune or my fault, to be leading both to danger, and difficulty, and to lay a true statement of all that had passed before you, I hurried through the preliminary preparations with the least possible delay, fearing, beyond all else, that I might be prevented by the agency of Father Edgar from following the only course which it appeared proper for me to take.”

“Then you did not part with your coadjutors on friendly terms?” said Scaviatoli.

"I could hardly be said to have parted with them at all," replied Father Eustace; "for of my departure they knew nothing. The reason why I kept my purpose secret from them was, because I feared that we should *not* part on friendly terms, were they made acquainted with it."

"In your last interview with Father Edgar, he told you explicitly, did he not, that he disapproved your disclosing your vocation to Miss de Morley?" said Scaviatoli.

"Yes, holy father, he did. But I was equally explicit, in giving him to understand, that if I continued this concealment, I must discontinue my visits to the deluded young lady, lest she should be still farther beguiled into committing a great sin."

"That was your opinion, Father Eustace," returned the General, with a smile, and tone of exceeding gentleness. "And what did Father Edgar seem to think about it?"

Remembering the detestable, the horrible insinuations, which Father Edgar, in their last interview, had thrown out, concerning the surest mode of preparing the mind of the heiress for abandoning the world, and pre-

ferring the seclusion of the cloister, the young missionary coloured violently, and was silent.

At the moment when this last terrible scene was passing between himself and Father Edgar, he had certainly felt no doubt whatever as to the atrocious meaning of the hints he had uttered; and when meditating afterwards upon all that had passed there, as well as upon all that had gone before it, he was so far from feeling that his conviction of the old monk's villany was weakened, by the leisurely recapitulation of his conduct—that the only result of such recapitulation was wonder at himself, that he could have been so long uncertain of the real nature of the measures which were, at last, *almost* openly avowed.

Yet now, now that the cold, quiet, scrutinizing eye of Scaviatoli was fixed upon him, as he thus smiled, and gently asked, “What Father Edgar seemed to think about it?” he felt as if he should be guilty of another sin, greater than all that he had committed already, if he dared to contaminate the ears of the holy man, who now sat, with a brow so placid and so pure, awaiting his answer, did he give breath to the horrible suspicions he

entertained against the man who had been appointed to watch over, and regulate his proceedings, as his superior.

At that weak moment, the wretched young man would willingly have given many years of life, could he have been sure that Scaviatoli had not, as yet, understood the full atrocity of the suspicions which he had himself conceived of Father Edgar's purposes. But, with all the skill which he had power to bring to the examination, he could not feel sure either that he had, or that he had not, been fully understood. For he fancied that he could have construed the smile and the words of Scaviatoli either way. If he had *not* understood him, the words, "And what did Father Edgar seem to think about it?" might simply mean to express a wish to know whether Father Edgar were of opinion that the young lady would, in truth, be exposed to the danger alluded to. Or it might mean, that Scaviatoli, having fully comprehended the insinuations of Father Eustace, had spoken the words, and smiled the smile, somewhat ironically, meaning to express, that whatever the younger man might think about such danger, the elder one might not have agreed with him.

No great time, however, was allowed him for these meditations; for, after a very short silence, Scaviatoli resumed, "You do not answer me, my excellent young friend, from which I conclude that our worthy Brother Edgar and yourself did not agree as to the danger likely to ensue if you followed his instructions implicitly. Am I right?"

"Yes, holy father," replied Father Eustace, readily, "we did not agree."

"But this disagreement, I presume, was only upon the minor, and comparatively unimportant question, as to the best manner of attaining the object that we have in view. You did not disagree with him, did you, as to the great advantage, in every way, of prevailing upon Miss de Morley to take the veil?"

"Assuredly not!" replied Father Eustace, earnestly. "No one could be more desirous than myself that Miss de Morley should take the veil."

"And I am quite sure you agreed, too, in the great and important doctrine, that among the brethren of Jesus, whatever an inferior is commanded to do by a superior, must be done. I am not mistaken in so believing, am I?"

"No, holy father," replied Eustace, "cer-

tainly not. If I know my own heart, my reverence for the duty of obedience goes as far as it is possible for any righteous man to carry it."

"*As far?*" said Scaviatoli, looking at him very earnestly, and laying a strong emphasis on the word "*AS.*" "*POSSIBLE?*" he added, much in the same tone. "*RIGHTEOUS?*" he repeated, still interrogatively, but still with the most placid and friendly aspect.

And then followed a short silence, which was broken by the General of the Jesuits, who, fixing his eyes once more, and very contrary to his usual custom, full upon the face of Father Eustace, said, slowly and distinctly—

"I confess that I suspect we do not fully understand each other. Have the kindness, Father Eustace, to explain yourself. Do the words which you have just used signify a belief that there is a limit to the obedience of a Jesuit?"

Neither the look, the words, nor the accent were any longer equivocal. Though General of the Jesuits, Scaviatoli had permitted himself at last to be fully understood. Father Eustace no longer felt any doubt as to whether his dreadful insinuation had been comprehended. He saw, and he felt to his

heart's core, that what he had considered as the vital part of the communication he had to make, and concerning which, his conscience had warned him to be cautious, even to the very verge of insincerity, BECAUSE its importance was so awfully, so tremendously great—he now felt that the half-worshipped General of his Order considered this as only worthy of being the subject of a sneer!

The revulsion of feeling produced in his mind by the discovery, was overwhelming.

The deep respect which the presence of the Chief of the Order inspired, produced not only on Father Eustace, but pretty nearly on all who approached him, a species of solemn restraint, which, for the most part, impeded all outward demonstration of feeling. Few were the Jesuits who would have smiled or frowned before him—none who would have ventured to assume an easy lounging position in their chair, or have in any way changed their attitude so as to attract attention. But now Father Eustace seemed to forget the more than regal presence in which he sat. He suddenly raised both hands to his forehead, and pressed them forcibly upon his brow, as if to still the vehement throbbing of his temples.

Scaviatoli marked the gesture, and understood the cause of it as well, or probably better, than Father Eustace himself. He felt that the link was broken by which the soul of the man before him had been held in bondage to him and to his laws. A question put at that moment, with a very moderate degree of skill, to the newly-awakened young man, would have sufficed to draw forth such an answer as might have made this fact, perhaps, clearer still. But Scaviatoli did not feel it to be necessary. Neither did he deem it worth while to insist upon any reply at all to the question he had just asked. He suffered the silence which followed to remain unbroken for a minute or two, and then said, very gently—

“You seem to be over-fatigued by your journey, Father Eustace. We will talk no farther of these matters now. Come to me again to-morrow at the same hour, and we will discuss together all that has passed between yourself and Father Edgar, fully and freely. Now go.”

Father Eustace waited for no second bidding. He rose instantly, bowed low, yet rather mechanically, than respectfully, and retired.

* * * * *

Whatever might have been the thoughts which occupied the sleepless hours of Father Eustace during that dreadful night, they did not prevent his punctually keeping his appointment on the following morning. It seemed, indeed, as if he had rather gained than lost strength thereby, for there was a sedate composure in every movement, which contrasted greatly with the nervous excitement and agitation with which he had prepared for the like visit on the previous day. •

His toilet being completed, and a silent prayer breathed in a spirit and by a formula considerably varying from what had been usual with him, he set forth, with a firm step and a firm countenance, to keep the appointment he had made with Scaviatoli.

On this occasion, also, he looked with considerable interest for the brass knob, for he greatly wished to finish this interview, which he was determined should be the last he would ever hold with the General of the Jesuits, as speedily as possible.

But when he reached the spot, its faint light did not shine upon him. In plain English, the brass knob was not visible, and Father Eustace became aware that this his final meet-

ing with his terrible superior, must be delayed. Whenever this check was met by an appointed visitor, who felt certain, nevertheless, that a clear field would be arranged for him ere long, it was the custom for him to turn aside into what looked rather like a dark recess than a room, and there await the return of the vanished knob, which would then be announced to him by one touch upon a silver bell which was suspended within the recess where he was waiting.

Father Eustace seated himself upon the one faintly-seen bench, which seemed to constitute all the furniture of this dark waiting place, and in less than five minutes after he had done so, the sound of the little silver bell announced that the tardy visitor who had preceded him, was dismissed.

He rose without a moment's delay, and had made one rapid step towards the entrance, when he suddenly felt the floor under his feet sinking beneath him, and in another moment the faint light, which had before surrounded him, was changed to total darkness. He uttered no cry; no word, no groan escaped him; but a sensation, probably not much unlike that caused by death itself, came upon his

spirit; he felt that he was doomed, and that the light of day was passed from him for ever!

* * * * *

Nevertheless, the prediction pronounced by Father Edgar to Sister Agatha was perfectly correct. Scaviatoli did not murder him.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE removal of Miss de Morley from Cuthbert Castle to London, though a very melancholy journey, was not without its good effects. At first setting out, indeed, the movement of the carriage appeared more than she could bear; she seemed hurried, weary, and feverish, and before the second stage, during which these painful feelings had manifested themselves, brought them to an inn offering comfortable accommodation for the night, the poor girl was so much exhausted that she lay back in the carriage, and wept like a tired child. Lady Sarah was dreadfully alarmed lest the experiment should prove very seriously injurious to her, but happily, on her being put to bed, she dropped into the first sound sleep that had visited her eye-lids since she last closed them in the belief that when they opened again

it would be to look on Stormont as her acknowledged lover.

She had passed the whole day almost entirely without nourishment, and her mother suggested that she should be roused for one moment for the purpose of taking sufficient refreshment to sustain her strength. But to this Mr. Wardour opposed himself with a degree of earnestness that his wife could not oppose; and the result proved that he was right, for she not only slept calmly till the morning, but took the breakfast which was set before her without any symptom of the alarming reluctance which she had recently shown.

By degrees the more painful symptoms of the fatigue produced by travelling ceased, but not so the good effects of it, for during the whole journey she slept at night with a degree of tranquillity which her poor mother had never hoped to watch over again.

The opinions of the medical men who were consulted on her arrival in London, were very various; some declaring, when questioned apart by Mr. Wardour, that her symptoms were decidedly those of incipient insanity, and

that of a kind the least likely to be favourably affected by any curative experiments; while others spoke more cheerily, yet not one among them seemed disposed to question the fact that the nervous system had been shaken in a manner to leave the brain in a partially diseased, and very precarious state.

But of all the careful eyes that were anxiously watching her, there were none more anxious than those of Mr. Wardour. It was impossible that any good and amiable man—and Mr. Wardour was essentially both—could have watched the ruin wrought by sorrow and suffering upon such a being as Juliana, without deeply feeling the tragedy of such a change as was now perceptible in her.

But the interest taken by Mr. Wardour in the condition of Miss de Morley was far more than this. That he mourned for her, for her own sake, is most certain; but he mourned for her on account of her mother a thousand times more. The delight with which he watched every trifling alteration in her condition, and every shadow of perceptible improvement, might have proved very satisfactorily, to any one who had understood him, that his heart had perfectly recovered the wounds,

and the sufferings, inflicted on it by his first love. That love makes us inventive is too obvious a fact, to require any French philosopher to teach it. In this case it was the love for the mother which rendered the lover inventive in the service of the daughter. This is, assuredly, by no means a common occurrence, yet one likely enough to be met with where there many such mothers, as Lady Sarah Wardour.

It was, in fact, hardly necessary for a man to be in love with her, in order to feel his heart moved to pitying sympathy, by the intensity of the suffering which was legible in her charming countenance as she watched the vacillating approaches towards improvement in her darling child, and Wardour felt that she must die, that they must all die, if something like a steadier hope were not made to shine in the distance. And to achieve this, he set himself to study the symptoms of poor Juliana's case, with a sort of philosophical acuteness which was very likely, if anything could, to attain the object which he had in view.

And in a most important degree it did attain it.

The bodily health of Juliana was wonder-

fully restored; the dismal attenuation of her once graceful figure was no longer so excessive as to rob it of all its beauty, and the delicate paleness of her cheek was no longer ghastly, as it had been for many weeks after the perusal of poor Stormont's farewell letter.

This great improvement set the heart of her mother pretty tolerably at ease respecting the danger which had seemed to threaten her life; and then it was that all the step-father's attention was directed to, perhaps, the still more difficult task of "ministering to the mind." The worst symptom now left in this part of the case, was the profound indifference with which she seemed to contemplate everything, and the great difficulty seemed to lie in the danger of making her feel too much, while endeavouring to make her feel at all.

The great object both of Lady Sarah and her husband, was to bring her into such a state of mind as might enable them to take her back to Cuthbert, without risking a relapse into the terrible state into which she had fallen when the truth respecting Stormont became known to her.

And here again it was Mr. Wardour who proved himself the most skilful physician.

Among the many events which had taken place since poor Juliana had been fully awake to anything, the marriage of William Curtis and Fanny Clarence was, he thought, the one most likely to give her a feeling of pleasure, could she be brought to fix her wandering thoughts upon it. The manner in which he tried this experiment was as successful as it was skilful. By degrees he brought her to talk of Fanny, and then to ask questions concerning her; which last was a very decided step towards improvement, as till then she had never appeared to feel sufficient interest in anything, to induce her to volunteer an inquiry concerning it.

The answers she now received to her inquiries were, of course, well calculated to lead to more, till at length a train of thought was awakened, which led her to ask why they did not go back to Cuthbert? Of course this led to everything they wished, as to this greatly longed-for return, and they arrived at the castle with the consolation of knowing that the bodily health of this dear object of all their cares was so nearly re-established, as to leave little doubt but that it would eventually be completely restored; while the still more

precious health of her mind, although such as to keep them tremblingly attentive to the influence of everything that approached her, was so decidedly improved, as to make the watching her varying symptoms an occupation rather of pleasurable than painful interest; for the hope of ultimate and perfect recovery became every day more reasonable.

Nor were these hopes at any moment seriously checked. The meeting with her friend Fanny was beneficial beyond their most sanguine hopes, for it seemed to awaken recollections that occupied her mind without paining it, and exercised her memory without any great danger of recalling persons and scenes, which it was desirable that she should forget, for ever.

But though her now happy mother, and her excellent and devoted step-father continued, though unobtrusively, to watch her with the most anxious care, and though they were perfectly correct in the favourable opinion of her condition, which every day strengthened in them, they were nevertheless most completely and entirely unaware, and unconscious, of the real process that was going on in her mind.

For some few weeks after the dreadful dis-

covery which had so fearfully tortured her feelings in every way, her mental powers were decidedly shaken and deranged; but this state, which resembled in some degree the effect produced by a concussion of the brain, endured, at least as to its worse symptoms, far less time than those around her supposed; but it was followed by a state of such lamentable bodily weakness, that the poor girl shrank from everything approaching to a discussion of her condition. She did, in truth, feel most sadly indifferent to it, and if any feeling like hope might have been said to gleam upon her, it was, that suggested by her great bodily weakness. Her greatest consolation was the belief that she should not live long.

But, by degrees, wiser, better, and more righteous feelings returned; and long before either Mr. Wardour or Lady Sarah ventured to flatter themselves that her intellect was perfectly restored, Juliana had not only recovered her noble faculties completely, but had given hours, days, weeks, and months, to such deep and solemn meditation on her position, and the duties it entailed upon her, that nothing could have better proved the sanity of her mind, than the resolution of not talking on

the subject till she had fully considered it herself.

The feeling that most painfully pressed upon her, arose from the consciousness that her religious opinions had been shaken. Without a shadow of harshness, without a shadow of anger, she looked back upon the conduct of Mr. Stormont towards her with the deep disapprobation that it deserved; but never for a moment did she doubt his individual rectitude.

She remembered all the specious arguments, so honestly urged by him, in favour of that perfect submission of spirit, which, by the help of a very little eloquence, may so easily be made to appear the surest safeguard against human weakness, both of heart, and head. She recalled every word he had uttered, and she recalled too, the earnest, and profoundly pious sincerity with which they were spoken. And she gave honour, where honour was due.

But from the doctrine, she now shrunk with abhorrence!

“Submission of the spirit to the will of God, is the sum total of our duties here below!” thought the self-schooling Juliana;

“and may that God forgive me for having dared, for a few brief hours, to believe that the will of man might be received in place of it!”

But Juliana had formally announced to her mother that she had adopted the creed of her father; and the scene had been a most painful one, and certainly would have been much more so, had not each felt, at that moment, at her heart, a soothing source of consolation for all the ills of life—for at that moment, both mother and daughter were contemplating an union with the man they loved—and few will have courage enough to deny that there is in such a contemplation something sufficiently absorbing, to weaken the feelings upon every other subject. But now that every such feeling was, not only for ever, and for ever, dead in her heart, but that the remembrance of its having ever existed came laden with anguish and remorse, her feelings were greatly different. She knew she had been hasty, and was rather more than doubtful that she had been wrong.

But would there not be something, not only painfully but culpably light, in now telling her mother that she had again changed her

mind, and wished to be considered a Protestant, and a member of the English church? She felt that by doing this she must inevitably leave on her mother's mind, and on that of her now deeply-valued friend and father, Mr. Wardour, the impression that her former change had been the result of a young girl's love, and not of a Christian's conviction. And yet her own heart acquitted her of this, though, with a conscientious candour, as rare as it was beautiful, she doubted whether she might even now be capable of judging herself in this matter.

These were the thoughts that kept her so long in solitary commune with her conscience, before she could bring herself to enter upon the subject with Mr. Wardour and Lady Sarah; and above a year had worn itself away, after their return to Cuthbert, before she had attained courage to enter the parish church, or even to communicate to her mother and father (for father she dearly loved to call him) her ardent wish to do so.

During this interval Lady Sarah Wardour had become the mother of a son; and it might have been some of the many feelings awakened by this event which at last urged her to seek

a conversation with Mr. Wardour, in which she at length opened to him her whole heart. The manner in which he received her confession may be easily imagined. The good man felt as if he never could have been (whatever he had fancied about it) completely happy till then.

From that moment, too, all Juliana's doubts and difficulties seemed to vanish. Fortunately for her own feelings, and for those of her friends, no overt act of entering the Romish church had ever been within her power, and her long illness was quite sufficient to account for her long absence from her place in her mother's pew. The occasion which she chose for re-appearing there, was that of her mother's appearing there also, after her confinement, and never, surely, were prayers and thanksgiving more sincerely offered up, than those of the Cuthbert Castle family upon this occasion.

One of the first proofs of Mr. Wardour's thoughtful care for Juliana was shown by his dismissal of the well-intentioned but imprudent housekeeper. The liberal annuity settled upon her at her departure, which took place before the removal of the family to London, probably

reconciled her in a great measure to the change; not to mention that the knowledge of the condition to which the Jesuit intrigue for her conversion had reduced her young mistress, had gone far towards persuading her that it was possible other places might be more agreeable to her, for the future, than Cuthbert Castle.

Juliana never named her, or even heard her named. The consciousness that all the dreadful suffering she had endured would have been spared, had this old servant of her family not joined in the plot to deceive her, as to the profession of Stormont, rendered the conviction that she had left the house a great relief to her. But after the great and delightful change in the state of her feelings, which followed the above-mentioned conversation with her step-father, no farther reserve on any subject, except only that of her love for the disguised priest, existed between the heiress and her parents.

Permission for Mr. Wardour's residence in the castle had been easily obtained from the bishop, and it was scarcely possible that days could move on with more tranquillity, and more rational enjoyment, than those granted

to him and his new family. The two following years added two little girls to the party, and had they been Juliana's own children, they could not have been dearer to her than they were.

But the heiress of Cuthbert began to think that it was her duty to become a woman of business, and to ascertain what power she had of disposing of the noble property she had inherited. Most unfeignedly did Lady Sarah desire that her eldest daughter should marry, and, strange as it may seem to many, her husband unfeignedly desired it also; but this was the only subject upon which they *dared* not speak to her, for on this only, when the attempt had once been made, did she evince a degree of agitation that alarmed them.

This conversation was abruptly brought to a close by Juliana's rising, and leaving the room. She was as pale as death, but on reaching the door, she turned round, and said distinctly, but in a voice that could never have been recognised for her own, "Never again! Mother! Father! Never say these words again!"

And they never were said again.

It was Juliana herself, and that without

communicating her intention either to father or mother, who wrote to the legal gentleman in London who had the management of her property, his father before him having held the same office to her grandfather. Her letter was short, and very much to the purpose, being solely to inquire whether she had any power of disposing of the whole, or of any part of the property she inherited from her father.

To her inexpressible delight—it was every way inexpressible, for she had neither the power nor the will to express what the intelligence occasioned her—she learnt that the entail of the castle, and by far the greater portion of the property, ended with herself, and that she had the power of disposing of it by her will, as she thought proper.

Her resolution was immediately taken. Leave having been properly asked, and granted, from the parents of her beautiful young brother, she obtained permission for him to bear the name and arms of De Morley, and forthwith devoted herself to him, as a widowed mother might have done.

“Still so young, and still so beautiful, Juliana,” said Mr. Wardour to her one day, in perfect sincerity of heart, “such a destiny as

you seem to have chalked out for yourself, is scarcely right, is scarcely natural."

The fair head of Juliana sunk for a moment on her breast, and a tear found its way down her cheek; but looking up again, and dashing away the drop with her hand, she replied, "Do not say so, my dearest father! Oh! do not! Did you know the fresh life, and the fresh joy, that warms my heart, as I look at my young Julian, my little heir, my darling successor, you would not be guilty of saying that it was not natural!"

And so Juliana was permitted to have her way, and a very happy way it was; and seven long years passed over them, without a care, or a grave sorrow, to sully its brightness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It happened, that one fine summer evening Miss de Morley had consented to give a birthday fête to her own boy, as she called him, and to his three young sisters (for Lady Sarah, at the distance of three years, had given birth to another little girl). This grand festivity was held upon the castle terrace, one end of which lost itself amidst a grove of oaks, that stretched away for half a mile to the north-east. A table, sumptuously spread with strawberries, cakes, and cream, was placed upon the turf, under the shelter of the fine old trees, and there sat the lady of Cuthbert, with the happy Rector, and his happy wife, and the three little cherub-looking girls, who were seated and served as the principal guests. But it was the young Julian de Morley who presided, and who, by his saucy prattle, and his patronizing airs and graces, kept the whole

party, nurses and nursery-maids included, in a roar. But suddenly stopping short in the midst of his sport, he turned to Miss de Morley, who sat with her back towards the wood, and at right angles to his own throne-like chair, and said, "Who is that, Mamma?"

This was the appellation he always gave her, it having been agreed, on all sides, that Lady Sarah was to content herself with that of Granny.

"Who *can* that be, Mamma?" repeated the boy, continuing to look in the direction of the wood. "How very old, and how very poor he looks! May I give him some cake?" Without waiting for an answer, the kind-hearted young heir slipped down from his high seat, with one hand full of plum-cake, and the other grasping a bun, and bustled away towards the object which had attracted his attention.

Miss de Morley now turned round, and perceived an object which answered very well to the child's description, for he looked old, poor, and way-worn.

There was no public path through the wood; on the contrary, it was considered as among the most closely preserved retreats in

the whole of the extensive domain, but this poor old man appeared to be advancing through it, perfectly unconscious that he was a trespasser.

Nevertheless, there was something so painfully languid in his step, and so humble, and care-worn, in his whole aspect, that it would have required a sterner spirit than that of the lady of Cuthbert to have bade him begone.

But without some such bidding, he had evidently no intention to depart, for he continued to draw nearer and more near to the festive party, and even when little Julian reached him with the cake, he did not pause upon the way, but taking the child's little hand, cake and all, into his, he continued to advance, till he was close behind the chair of Miss de Morley.

"Which is the lady that you call Mamma?" demanded the old man, in a tone that seemed to indicate great weakness.

"This one," returned Julian, laying his hand upon the shoulder of his eldest sister. "And that is Papa, and that is Granny," he added, "and now you may sit down, and eat your cake."

The old man stretched out his hand towards

the back of Miss de Morley's chair; but it was too late; he failed in his attempt to take hold of it, and fell to the ground. His being a poor way-worn traveller did not prevent either the servants or their masters from crowding round the unfortunate man, who had evidently fallen from weakness; and thoughts nearly akin to those of Julian, when he suggested giving him cake, arose among them.

"Let him have a little wine brought, Juliana," said Mr. Wardour, kneeling beside him. "His hand is cold, and his pulse almost gone. I greatly fear that he is dying from inanition. Go, Susan, go into the house, and desire the butler to let us have a little wine immediately."

The order was promptly obeyed, and the wine administered with good effect, for the poor man, having swallowed a little of it, once more opened his eyes.

No sooner had he done so, than Juliana, who had remained standing near him, but more occupied in watching for the return of the servant from the house, than in examining his features, uttered a fearful cry. The almost prostrate man raised himself up, and gazing

with an indescribable expression of melancholy interest in her face, exclaimed, "You know me, then, Mrs. Wardour!"

"Know you? No! I do not know you! It is not so!—it cannot be so! But I am not Mrs. Wardour! Whoever you are, I am not Mrs. Wardour; I am Juliana—Juliana de Morley!"

"And this child?" said the stranger, faintly.

"He is my brother," she replied.

"Did he not call you mother?" demanded he.

"In sport—in sport—who are you? Oh! in the name of Heaven! who are you?" she said, wildly.

"Let me not speak a name so hateful!" replied the wretched man. "Nor is it needful. You know me, Juliana! Think not that your eyes deceive you!"

"But I will *not* believe it," she replied, still gazing on him with a look in which love and fear were strangely mixed. "Why are we not both dead? What new horrors are you come to teach me?"

"Juliana!" he replied, piteously, stretching out his emaciated arms towards her, "fear me

no more! I am come to die at your feet! Will you refuse your pardon to a dying man?"

"Refuse you pardon, Stormont?" she replied, in a softened voice, while salutary tears flowed down her cheeks—"refuse you pardon! May the great God of mercy forgive us all, as freely as I now forgive you!"

"Amen! Amen!" he murmured in return. "Juliana, I die in peace!"

* * * * *

These were the last words ever uttered by Father Eustace. But the spirit seemed to speak after death, in the look of gentle, and resigned composure that sat upon his features. A small packet was found upon his person, with the words "*For Juliana*," inscribed upon it.

It contained a full, but very brief avowal, that after many years of earnest prayer, and meditation, while rigorously confined within the walls of his own convent, he had come to the conviction that the Gospel was the book of life to the Christian, and not *that* containing the laws of the Company of Jesus.

This little memorial concluded by the touchingly earnest expression of his hope that

the pure and simple faith which he had disturbed, had been restored to her, upon her discovering the false seeming of the wretched agent who had been employed to convert her.

* * * * *

Great, and certainly very reasonable, were the fears of Mr. Wardour and Lady Sarah, that the intellect of the suffering Juliana would be shaken, and perhaps destroyed for ever, by this scene.

But it was not so.

Unbroken prosperity is said to harden the heart; and great suffering has undoubtedly a tendency to blunt the feelings, or, at any rate, to lessen the effect which succeeding sufferings bring.

What Juliana de Morley felt at seeing the man she had loved so truly, expire at her feet, no human being can know; for never throughout the course of a long life was she heard to allude in any way either to the life, or death of Edward Stormont.

It is probable, however, that the little packet found upon his person, and addressed to her, had afforded her some sort of melancholy consolation. Perhaps she found therein reason to hope that in the end she had more

effectually converted him, than he, her. This paper, ingeniously protected by a black silken cover, which permitted its being opened for perusal with great facility, was found after her death suspended about her neck by a small chain of gold.

When saying that Juliana lived, and died, without alluding either to the name or person of Edward Stormont, I should have made the exception of about five minutes, which occurred during the day that followed that of his death.

The body had been removed into the castle without any order having been waited for, or given by its pale mistress. But the observant eye of Mr. Wardour had watched hers fix, not a wild, but a very earnest gaze, on the servants who had been summoned to remove it. And there was in that gaze, besides its earnestness, a something of stern authority, that seemed ready to exert itself if necessary.

Mr. Wardour fancied he understood it, and it is probable that he did; for no sooner did the man turn towards the castle, in a manner that seemed to ensure its entrance there, than this look of stern authority passed away; and though pale as the corpse she had looked upon,

she uttered no sound of suffering or of woe, but having silently watched the entrance of the body within her castle walls, and then, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, waited silent and motionless, as if to spare herself the chance of overtaking the group which surrounded it, she walked with a slow, but steady step in the same direction, and entered the mansion without having pronounced a single word.

Lady Sarah would have followed her, but her husband succeeded in dissuading her from doing so. Her own maid carried lights to her room as a matter of course, and to her she said, "I shall not want you to-night, Mary;" after which no more was heard of Juliana till the following morning, when she rang her bell, and told her maid to request Mr. Wardour to come to her dressing-room.

He did so instantly, and alone.

She raised her speaking eyes to his for one moment, and received a look in return that made her turn away her head; but she extended her hand to him as she did so, and had volumes been uttered between them, they could not have more completely understood each other.

She then turned to her writing-desk, which

lay open upon the table, and took from it a sheet of paper, folded, but not sealed. "You will see that these orders are obeyed, my dear father?"

"I will," he replied, as he took the paper from her hand.

"Now, then, leave me. But tell my dear mother to let me see her here. Tell her, too, that I feel strong and able, both in mind and body, to bear everything."

The affectionate thoughtfulness of this message was fully felt by him to whom it was given; he felt its truth also, and having impressed a paternal kiss upon her brow, he left her, with a well-founded, and most delightful hope that many happy years were still before them. The paper which Juliana had given him contained directions for the interment of Edward Stormont in the spacious vault which was constructed beneath the castle chapel, and specified that a plain white marble tablet should be placed upon the wall, with no inscription, save the name of Edward Stormont, and the date of his death. At the bottom of the page was a memorandum, which ran thus: "Let this paper be preserved, and given to my brother, and heir, Julian Wardour de Morley,

on the day of my death. He is requested by it, to let my body be buried beside that of Edward Stormont, and that a black velvet pall shall, at the time of my interment, be thrown over both the coffins.

“Signed, JULIANA DE MORLEY.”

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Mr. Wardour was right in his hopeful prognostications for the future. The having witnessed the last scene of Edward Stormont's life, did Juliana de Morley infinitely more good than harm.

From that time she resumed her constant occupation of the library; and having removed all Popish appendages from the altar, prevailed on Mr. Wardour, without much difficulty, as may be easily believed, to perform a short service of family morning prayer in it, daily. The place selected by the lady of the castle for herself during this service, was exactly opposite the tablet which bore the name of Edward Stormont; and the only indication by which her father and her mother were able to perceive that he still held an undying place in her remembrance, was the

fixedness with which her eyes rested on it during the singing, by the whole congregation, herself included, of the daily hymn. Juliana de Morley lived to an advanced age, and enjoyed the blessing gratefully. It enabled her not only to watch over the last days of her beloved mother, and most excellent step-father, but to see the happy establishment of her three sisters in marriage; and then—which was the crowning joy of all—the marriage of her adopted Julian with the youngest and late-born daughter of her dear and dearest friend, Mrs. Curtis, *ci-devant* Fanny Clarence.

This wedding was a joyful one indeed; for Julian de Morley, either because he was too happy to wish for any change, or because his fate had settled the matter for him, never could be persuaded to fall seriously in love till he had attained the ripe age of thirty years; and then the suddenly-grown beautiful Juliana Curtis, at the age of seventeen, so completely changed all his views and opinions, that he speedily became convinced that he could not possibly endure existence without her. And when did Juliana the first ever enjoy a happiness so perfect as when preparing the elegant abode of Juliana the second, within her castle walls? Certainly never. This last marriage

was a brilliant one indeed, and such a fête was given at the christening of Julian de Morley, the son and heir of Julian and Juliana his wife, as is remembered at Cuthbert, even to the present day, with enthusiasm.

O YES! O YES! O YES!

The two Lady Letchmeers married, and very thankfully too, a pair of the Rowley brothers; but it was Miss Raymond who got the eldest; which piece of good fortune was owing to his having taken a fancy, in a quiet unsporting way, for horse-flesh. And he could not have done better. His stud was so talked of, that the manufactory was forgotten.

No sooner was the intended marriage of William Curtis and Fanny Clarence announced, which was about three months after Langley Knoll, the intended residence of the young couple, became vacant, than Mrs. Stanberry received "notice to quit" from her daughter. The prudent precaution of inviting Mrs. Clarence, and Fanny, *to pass a few days at Cuthbert Castle*, had saved them from being turned, neck and heels, out of the window.

As the beauteous Adelaide lost thereby the opportunity she would have preferred for the

exercise of the vehement energies that were at work within her, she threw herself upon the boxes, and packing cases; and any one who had seen her then for the first time, might have fancied that the Fornarina had walked out of her frame in a passion.

She gave her adoring mother a good deal of trouble before she settled for life, which she did at last, by falling desperately in love with, and finally marrying, a *courier* hired to attend them upon a journey from Venice, to Vienna.

Father Edgar returned to his convent, where he died at a great age, and not without some hope of subsequent canonization. Sister Agatha fell a victim to an abundant crop of walnuts, of which she had ever been extravagantly fond. Scaviatoli was poisoned; but the cause of his death was never suspected by any, and it is still confidently asserted by many; that his name, too, is about to adorn the Romish Calendar.

THE END.

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